PENANCE IN AMBROSE, LEO AND IN THE SERMONS OF RECONCILIATION OF THE ROMAN ARCHDEACON

A dissertation by

PETER JOHN RIGA

presented to

The Faculty of the
Graduate Theological Union
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

Berkeley, California
April 23, 1974

Committee Signatures:

Massey H. Shepherd, Jr.
Chairman

Toivo I. Harjunpaa

Joseph M. Powers, S.J.

Dorothy H. Donnelly

Pierre Etchelecu, O.F.M.

XUM

PROLOGUE

In the following thesis, I will attempt to examine the notion and background of the sacrament of penance in three authors: Ambrose, Leo I and the Roman Archdeacon. These authors can be seen as the summation of the ancient penitential discipline in the Western church and, as such, are important witnesses to the penitential discipline of the early church. Surprisingly, there is little on this subject in English and even in the cited works of the historians of penance in the early church (Vogel, Galtier, Palmer, and Poschman), there is very little that has been done on this period (fifth century, West in Italy). The contribution which this thesis will hope to make is to fill this lacuna in the history of penance.

The conclusions from this study will attempt to show how and why the early church considered the sacrament of penance as a seperate discipline from that of baptism and above all, how these authors -- as representing the penitential discipline in the West -- conceived the role of the church and within the church, the role of the priest (pontifex) in the actual forgiveness of sins and the reconciliation of the sinner to God.

This study is evidently important from a sacramental point of view since it will give us an insight into the importance which the early church attached to the role of the priest in the whole process of sacramental reconciliation. The study will also be a contribution to the area of patristics in the period studied, i.e. the notion of penance and reconciliation in Ambrose, Leo and the Archdeacon of Rome.

For pedagogical purposes we have included an appendix on penance

XUM

in Jerome. The reason Jerome was given only a short appendix is that this author has comparatively little to say on penance and the priestly role, but it was thought important to add this note because he was an important Western author of the fifth century.

The second appendix is the text of the sermons of the Roman Archdeacon reproduced from the critical text of the Corpus Christianorum. It is annotated to show the theological and penitential highlights of the author.

The third appendix follows the same lines as the second appendix, concentrating on the penitential discipline of the Gelasian Sacramentary.

For purposes of historical clarity, we have added an introductory chapter on the background and history of penance up to the fifth century. This will help the reader to situate the authors studied in this thesis within the total context of the history of penance in the early Church.

XUM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prologue 2

Table of Contents 4

Signs and Abreviations 7

A. Works of Ambrose, Leo, The Roman Archdeacon 7

B. General signs and abreviations 8

Bibliography 9

A. Editions 9

B. Other Primary Sources 13

C. General Works and Articles 14

Introduction 20

Chapter I - A Short History of Penance 24

Chapter II - Penance in Ambrose 48

1. Chronology of the Works of Ambrose 48

2. Introduction to our Study of Ambrose 52

3. Novatianism as the Central Penitential Preoccupation in Ambrose 61

4. Theological Aspects of Penance in Ambrose 71

A. The Indulgentia of God 71

B. The Reconciliation in Ecclesial Penance is the Reconciliation with God 74

5. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Penance 78

6. Recourse to the Church 79

A. The Church as Stabulum 79

B. The Church, that is the people, gives its Suffragium 81

7. The Jus Sacerdotale 83

A. The Meaning of the Terms Ligare and Solvere in Ambrose 84

XUM

B. The *Ministerium* in Ambrose 90

8. The *Correptio* in Ambrose 99

9. The *Moderatis* in Ambrose 103

10. The Role of the Eucharist in Penance 108

11. Penance in Ambrose: Some Conclusions 113

Chapter III - *Penance in Leo the Great* 119

1. Introduction 119

2. The Grandeur and the Humility of the Priest According to Leo 123

3. How does Leo Motivate His Decision in Matter of Penance? 131

4. The Tasks of the Priest in Penance 137

A. The Attitudes of the Priest 140

B. Clerics are Excluded from Public Penance . . . 144

5. Penance in Leo: Some Conclusions 149

Chapter IV - *The Roman Liturgical Rite and Prayers of Reconciliation of the Fifth Century* 151

1. Introduction 151

A. The Sermons 153

2. The Members of the Assembly 156

3. The Intervention of the Assembly 157

4. The Intervention of the Pontiff 163

5. The Hierarchical Order of Penance 170

6. Some Comparisons with Other Sources 173

A. The Solemn Rite of Reconciliation of the Gelasian Sacramentary 173

B. St. Augustine 179

7. Penance in the Roman Archdeacon: Conclusion and Summary 182

XUM

Epilogue 185

Appendices 188

Appendix I Penance in Jerome 188

Appendix II Archidiaconi Romani Sermones Tres de Reconciliandis Poenitentibus 197

Appendix III Sacramentarium Gelasianum 214

Indices 223

1. Works of Ambrose 223

2. Works of Leo 226

3. Other Ancient Sources. 227

4. Modern Authors 228

SIGNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A. Works of Ambrose, Leo, The Roman Archdeacon

Apol.	De Apologia David
Cain	De Cain et Abel
De Hel.	De Helia et ieiunio
De obitu theo.	De obitu Theodosii
De sacr.	De sacramentis
De Paenit.	De Paenitentia
Exp. Ev. Luc.	Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam
Exp. ps. I, XXXVIII, etc.	Explanatio super psalmum I, XXXVIII, etc.
Exp. ps. CXVIII	Expositio psalmi CXVIII
Ep.	Epistola
Noe	De Noe

B. General Signs and Abbreviations

CC	Corpus Christianorm
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum eclesiasticorum latinorum
DCAL	Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie
DBS	Enchiridion Symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum (editio XXXIII, 1965)
DTC	Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Scriftsteller
PG	Patrologia graeca, ed. J. P. Migne
PL	Patrologia latina, ed. J. P. Migne
PSCUA	Patristic studies of the Catholic University of America
SC	Sourses Chrétiennes

VITA	Vita S. Ambrosii a Paulino eius notario ad beatum Augustinum Conscripta (Paoline di Milano, Vita di Ambrogio. Introduzione, Testo critico e note e cura di M. Pellegrino. Verba seniorum, M. S. I. Roma, 1961)
Mt.	St. Matthew
Mc.	St. Mark
Lk.	St. Luke
Jn.	St. John
Heb.	Epistle to the Hebrews
I Pt.	First Epistle of St. Peter
I Cor.	First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians
II Cor.	Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians
Gal.	Epistle to the Galatians

Bibliography

A. EDITIONS

I. The Works of Ambrose

1. Original Editions

The extant works of Ambrose include critical texts edited in the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL). They are listed as follows:

Prima pars, qua continentur libri Exameron, De paradiso, De Cain et Abel, De Noe, De Abraham, De Isaac, De bono mortis. Recensuit C. Schenkl. Pragae, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1897 (CSEL, 32-1).

Pars altera, qua continentur libri De Iacob, De Joseph, De patriarchis, De fuga saeculi, De interpellatione Iob et David, De apologia David, Apologia David Altera, De Helia et ieiunio, De Nabuthae, De Tobia. Recensuit C. Schenkl. Pragae, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1897 (CSEL, 32-2).

Pars quarta: Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam. Recensuit C. Schenkl, opus auctoris morte interruptum absoluit H. Schenkl. Pragae, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1902 (CSEL, 32-4).

Pars quinta: Expositio Psalmi CXVIII. Recensuit M. Petschenig. Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1913 (CSEL, 62).

Pars sexta: Explanatio Psalmorum XII. Recensuit M. Petschenig. Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1919 (CSEL, 64).

Pars septima: Explanatio symboli, De sacramentis, De mysteriis, De paenitentia, De excessu fratris, De obitu Valentiniani, De obitu Theodosii. Recensuit O. Faller, Vindobonae, 1955 (CSEL, 73).

Pars octava: De fide (ad Gratianum Augustum). Recensuit O. Faller, Vindobonae, 1962 (CSEL, 78).

Pars nona: De Spiritu Sancto libri tres, De incarnationis dominicae sacramento. Recensuit O. Faller, Vindobonae, 1964 (CSEL, 79).

From the collection of the Corpus Christianorum we have only the Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis opera. Pars IV: Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam, Fragmenta in Esaiam. Cura et studio M. Adriaen (CC. 14). Turnholti, 1957.

The other works of Ambrose will be found in the Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina. Accurante J.P. Migne, t.XVI, Paris, 1880.

2. Translations

There are English translations of many works of Ambrose, but we have opted for the original texts with some translations in the footnotes from the following:

J. Savage. Hexameron, Paradise and Cain and Abel (The Fathers of the Church, 42). New York, 1961.

M.J.A. Buck. De Helia et ieiunio (Patristic Studies of the Catholic University of America, 19). Washington, D.C., 1929.

L.M. Zucker. De Tobia (PSCUA, 35). Washington, D.C., 1933.

H. De Romesrin. Some of the Principle Works of St. Ambrose. (A select library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2nd edition). New York, Oxford., 1896.

R.H. Connolly. The 'Explanatio symboli ad initiandos'. A Work of St. Ambrose (Texts and Studies, 10). Cambridge, 1952.

J.J. Sullivan and M. McGuire. Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and St. Ambrose (The Fathers of the Church, 22). New York, 1953.

T.A. Kelly. Liber de consolatione Valentiniani (PSCUA, 58). Washington, D.C., 1940.

M.M. Beyenka. Saint Ambrose. Letters (The Fathers of the Church, 26). New York, 1954.

Some translations of Ambrose's works can be found in H. De Romesrin. Some of the Principle Works of St. Ambrose, translated (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church). Second Series. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. X. New York, 1896.

For our purposes here, the French translation of Gabriel Tissot has been of great value:

Ambroise de Milan. Traité sur l'Evangile de S. Luc. I: Livres I-VI (Sources Chrétiennes, 45). Paris, 1956.

Ambroise de Milan. Traité sur l'Evangile de S. Luc. II: Livres VII-X (Sources Chrétiennes, 52). Paris, 1958.

II. The Works of Leo I

1. Original Editions

The critical sources of the letters and sermons of Leo I are abundant and sufficiently critical to warrant some mention. The

XUM

critical texts are mostly from Ballerini who corrected the critical edition of P. Quesnel. This is what is substantially conserved for us in the Collection of Migne, Patrologia Latina. Series latina. Accurante J.P. Migne, t.54 (Paris, 1880).

Other primary sources of Leo's writings are:

E. Schwartz, ed. Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum, II. 4, Leonis Papae I epistolarum collectiones (Berlin, 1932). This is reproduced in his Handbuch der Klassichen Altertumswissenschaft, IV, 2 (1920), pp. 580-640.

Silva Tarouca. S. Leonis Magnae epistolae contra Eutychis haeresim (449-458), Romae, 1954 (Textus et Documenta in usum exercitationum et praelectionum, acad. Series theo., no. 15 et 20).

In the critical series of the Corpus Christianorum, we have:

A. Chavasse, ed. Sancti Leonis Magni Romani Pontificis Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta (CC. 138), Turnholti, 1973 (Tractatus 1-38).

A. Chavasse, ed. Sancti Leonis Magni Pontificis Tractatus Septem et Nonaginta (CC. 138A), Turnholti, 1973 (Tractatus 39-96).

2. Translations

Good translations of the sermons and letters of Leo exist in various languages. We cite those which we have consulted:

C.L. Feltoe. The Letters and Sermons of Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church). Second Series, Vol. XII. Grand Rapids, Mich., 1964.

R. Dolle. Léon le Grand. Sermons (Sources Chrétiennes, nos. 22 bis, 49, 74, 200). Paris, 1957-1973.

Th. Steeger. Des heiligen Papstes und Kirchenlehrers Leo des Grossen sämptliche Sermonen.. In Bibliothek der Kirchenväter. München, 1927, 2 vols.

W. Bright. Select Sermons of St. Leo. London, 1886.

III. The Roman Archdeacon

The critical edition of the three sermons of the Roman Archdeacon are contained in the Corpus Christianorum, vol. IX, pp. 349-363, ed. F. Heylen. Turnholti, 1957.

Excerpts of the sermons can also be found in:

G. Morin. Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti. Romae, 1930.

Comparisons of the sermons with the Gelasian Sacramentary have been made using the critical editions of:

E. Bourque. Étude sur les Sacramentaires Romains. Les Textes Primitifs. Roma, 1949.

L.C. Mohlberg, ed. Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aeclesiae Ordinis Anni Circuli. Roma, 1960.

There are no English translations of these sermons.

B. OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Ancient Christian Writers, ed. Quasten - Plumpe, Westminster, Md., 1946.

2. Barnby, J., The Book of Pastoral Rule and Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great, Translated (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church). Second Series, Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. XII. New York, 1895.

3. Clavis Patrum Latinorum (Sacris Erudiri, 3), 2nd ed., ed. E. Dekkers and E. Gaar, Steenbrugge, 1961.

4. Duchesne, L., Le Liber Pontificalis, I - II (2nd ed., 1955) and III. Paris, 1957.

5. The Fathers of the Church, ed. Schopp and Deferrari. New York, 1946.

6. Florilegium Patristicum, ed. Geyer-Zellinger. Bonn, 1948.

7. Freemantle, W. H., The Principle Works of St. Jerome, translated (A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church) Second Series. Ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. VI. New York, 1893.

8. Mohlberg, L. C., Sacramentarium Veronense (Sacramentarium Leonianum). Roma, 1956.

9. Patrologia latinae Supplementum, ed. A. Hamman, Paris, 1958.

10. Wallis, R. E., The Writings of St. Cyprian, together with the writing of Novatian, (Ante-Nicene Christian Library). Vol. XIII. Edinburgh, 1869 (Ante-Nicene Fathers 5, Buffalo, New York, 1888).

C. GENERAL BOOKS AND ARTICLES

1. Adams, A. M., The Latinity of the Letters of St. Ambrose (Patristic Studies, XII). Washington, D. C., 1927.

2. Altaner, B., Patrology. New York, 1960. (Trans. from the 5th German edition, Patrologie of 1958).

3. Anciaux, P., Le Sacrament de la pénitence, Louvain, 1957. English trans., The Sacrament of Penance. New York, 1962.

4. _____, La Théologie du Sacrament de Pénitence au XII^e Siècle, Louvain, 1949.

5. _____, "Histoire de la discipline pénitentielle" in Problems du Confesseur, Paris (1963), 53-80.

6. Batiffol, P., "Léon I", Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique, 14, Cols. 218-301, Paris, 1926.

7. _____, Le Siège Apostolique (Paris, 1924), 417-618.

8. Bardy, G., "La papauté de Saint Innocent à Saint Léon le Grand," in l'Histoire de l'Église of Fliche - Martin, IV (Paris, 1937), 142-196.

9. Benevot, M., trans. St. Cyprian: The Lapsed. The Unity of the Catholic Church. Westminster, Md., 1957.

10. Botte, B., "Secundi meriti munus", Questions Liturgiques et Paroisielles, 28 (1936), 84-88.

11. Bussini, F., "l'intervention de l'Assemblé des fideles au moment de la réconciliation des pénitents, d'après les trois 'postulationes' d'un archidiacre romain du V-VI^e siècle," Revue des Sciences Religieuses, 41 (1967), 28-38.

12. _____, "Intervention de l'Evêque dans la réconciliation des pénitents d'après les trois 'postulationes' d'un archidiacre romain du V^e-VI^e siècle", in Revue des Sciences Religieuses, 42, (1968), 326-338.

13. Cantwell, L., "Pax Ecclesiae: Pax Dei; or, The Church and the Sacrament of Penance", Clergy Review, 48 (1963), 613-622.

14. Connolly, R. N., "Some Disputed Works of St. Ambrose," The Downside Review, 65 (1947), 7-20, 121-130.

15. Courtney, F., "The Administration of Penance, I. Ancient Public Penance", Clergy Review, 26 (1961), 10-27.

16. _____, "The Administration of Penance, II. The Development of Private Penance", Clergy Review, 46 (1961), 85-98.

XUM

17. Coppens, J., l'Imposition des Mains et les Rites Connexes dans le Nouveau Testament et l'Eglise Ancienne. Wettern, 1925.

18. D'Ales, A., l'Edit de Calliste. Paris, 1914.

19. _____, Novatien. Etude sur la theologie romaine au milieu du III^e siecle. Paris, 1925.

20. Daly, C. B., "Novatian and Tertullian. A Chapter in the History of Puritanism", in Irish Theological Quarterly, 19 (1952), 33-43.

21. DeLabriolle, Pierre., Histoire de la litterature latine Chretienne, 2 vols. Paris, 1947.

22. _____, Saint Ambroise. Paris, 1908.

23. Dekkers, E., "Autour de l'oeuvre liturgique de Saint Léon le Grand", Sacris Erudiri, (1958), 363-398.

24. Delhaye, K., Ecclesia Mater chez les Peres des trois premiers siècles. Paris, 1964.

25. DeSoos, M. B., Le Mystere Liturgique d'après Saint Léon le Grand. Munster - Aschendorff, 1958.

26. _____, "Présence du mystère du salut dans la liturgie d'après Saint Léon le Grand", Ephemerides Liturgicae, (1959), 116-135.

27. Doronzo, E., De paenitentia, 4 vols. (Milwaukee, 1949-1953).

28. Dudden, F. H., The Life and Times of Saint Ambrose, 2 vols. Oxford, 1953.

29. Duval, Y., Sacramentum et Mysterium chez Saint Léon le Grand. Lille, 1959.

30. D'Ercole, G., Penitenza canonico-sacramentale delle origini alla pace Costantiniana. Rome, 1963 (Pont. Universitá de Laterano).

31. Deutsch, S. M., "Des Ambrosius Lehre von der Sünde und der Sündentilgung," in Jahresbericht über das Konigl. Joachimsthalsche Gymnasium, 1867, 1-58.

32. Frank, H., "Ambrosius und die Busseraussöhnung in Mailand. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der mailändischen Gründonnerstagsliturgie," in Heilige Ueberlieferung. Ausschnitte aus der Geschichte der Mönchtums und des heiligen Kultes (Festschrift I. Herwegen). Münster, 1938, 136-173.

33. Galle, R., "S. Leone Magno e i suoi Scritti," Didaskaleion, VIII, 2 (1930), 51-235.

XUM

34. Galtier, Paul., l'Église et la Remission des Péchés aux Premiers Siècles. Paris, 1932.

35. _____, De paenitentia tractatus dogmatico -- historicus, ed. nova. Romae, 1950.

36. _____, Aux Origines du Sacrament de Pénitence. Rome, 1951.

37. Goeller, E., "Analekten zur Bussgeschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts," in Römische Quartalscrift, 36 (1928), 235-298 (Theology of Ambrose, 262-290).

38. _____, Papsttum und Bussgewalt in Spätrömischer und Frühmittelalterlicher Zeit. Fribourg im Br., 1933.

39. Gregoire le Grand, Morales sur Job (Libres 1 et 2), Trans. introduction et notes de Dom R. Gillet et Dom A. de Gaudemaris (Sources Chrétiennes, 32) Paris, 1950.

40. Gryson, R., Le prêtre selon Saint Ambroise. Leuven, 1968.

41. Dumont C., "La réconcilation avec l'Église et la necessité de l'Aveu sacramentel," Nouvelle Révue Théologique, 81 (1959), 577-597.

42. Harnack, A., Novation. Novatianisches Schisma. Kirche der Katharer, in Real-Encyklopedie für protest. theologie und Kirche, 2. Aufl., X, Leipzig, 1882, 652-670.

43. Hervé de l'Incarnation, "La grâce dans l'oeuvre de S. Léon le Grand," Révue de théologie ancienne et medievale , 22 (1955), 17-55, 193-212.

44. _____, The Early Literature to the Time of Gregory the Great. London, 1960.

45. Hudson, G., La Perfection Chrétienne d'après les Sermons de Saint Léon Le Grand. Paris, 1958.

46. Jalland, T., The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great. New York, 1941.

47. Lange, W., "l'Appel à la pénitence dans le Christianisme primitif," Collect. Mechlin., 29 (1959), 380-390.

48. Latko, E. F., Origen's Concept of Penance. Quebec, 1949.

49. Lea, Henry C., History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church, 3 vols. Philadelphia, 1896.

50. Leclercq, H., "Léon I," Dictionaire d'archeologie chrétienne et de liturgie, VIII - 2.

XUM

51. Koch, R., "Die Busserentlassung in der alten abendländischen Kirche," in Theologische Quartalscrift, 82, (1900), 481-534.

52. Magistretti, M., "Il Sacramento della confessione secondo S. Ambrogio," in La Scuola Cattolica, 30 (1902), 493-512.

53. Mainbourg, L., Histoire du pontificat de Saint Léon le Grand. LaHaye, 1687.

54. Mohlberg, L. C., Liber sacramentorum Romanae Acclesiae ordinis anni circuli (Sacramentarium Gelasianum.) Series Rerum ecclesiasticorum documenta, series maior: Fontes IV, Romae, 1960.

55. Mohlberg, K. C., Sacramentarium Veronense. Roma, 1956.

56. Monachino, V., La cura pastorale a Milano, Cartagine e Roma nel secolo IV. Roma, 1942 (particularly pp. 110-132 where we are given a description of the penitential rite at Milan).

57. Morin, Jean (Morinus), Commentarius Historicus de disciplina in administratione sacramenti poenitentiae. Venetiis, 1702.

58. Mazeris, D., Doctrina Sancti Leonis Magni de Christo restituutore et Sacerdote. Mundelein, 1941.

59. Mortimer, R. C., Origins of Private Penance in the Western Church. Oxford, 1939.

60. Mueler, Mary M., The Vocabulary of Pope St. Leo the Great. The Catholic University of America, 1943. (The Catholic University of America. Patristic Studies, Vol. LXVII).

61. Munier, C., Les Statuta Ecclesiae antiqua. Paris, 1960.

62. Odoardi, G., La dottrina della penitenza in S. Ambrogio. Roma, 1941.

63. Palanque, J. R., St. Ambroise et l'empire romain. Contribution à l'histoire des rapports de St. Ambroise et de l'État à la fin du IVe siècle. Paris, 1933.

64. Palmer, P. F., Sources of Christian Theology, II. Sacraments and Forgiveness. Westminster, Md. 1959.

65. Poschmann, Bernhard, Abendländische Kirchenbusse in Augsgang des Christlichen Altertums. Munich, 1928 (I).

66. _____, Abendländische Kirchenbusse in frühen Mittelalter. Breslau, 1930 (II).

XUM

67. _____, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV, 3. Busse und letzte Oelung. Freiburg, 1951. English translation. Penance and the Anointing of the Sick. New York, 1964 (IV).

68. Quasten, J., Patrology, 3 vols. Utrecht and Westminster, Md. 1950-1960.

69. Rauschen, G., Eucharist and Penance in the First Six Centuries. St. Louis 1913

70. Rahner, K., "Das Sacrament der Busse als Wiederversöhnung mit der Kirche," in Schriften zur theologie, VIII. Ensiedeln-Zurich-Cologne, 1968.

71. Regnier, A., S. Léon le Grand. Paris, 1910.

72. Riga, P., Sin and Penance, Milwaukee, 1962.

73. Schillebeeckx, Edward, Ed., Sacramental Reconciliation. New York, 1971.

74. Schmitz, Hermann J., Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche. Mainz, 1883.

75. Steeger, Th., Die Klauseltechnic Leos des Grossen in seinem Sermonen. Hassfurt, 1908.

76. Tertullian, Treatises on Penance. Trans. W. P. Le Saint. Westminster, Md., 1959 (Ancient Christian Writers, no. 28).

77. Testard, L., Le Mot 'Sacramentum' dans les Sermons de Saint Léon le Grand. Paris, 1948.

78. Tixeront, J., A Handbook of Patrology. St. Louis, Mo., 1957.

79. Vogel, C., "Reflection de l'historien sur la discipline pénitentielle dans l'Église latine," Verité et Vie, 12 (1969-1970), 23-46.

80. _____, Le pécheur et la pénitence au moyen-age. Paris, 1969.

81. _____, La discipline pénitentielle en Gaule des origenes a la fin du VII^e siècle. Paris, 1952.

82. _____, Le pécheur et la pénitence dans l'Église ancienne. Paris, 1960.

83. Vogt, H. J., Coetus Sanctorum. Der Kirchenbegriff des Novatian und die Geschichte seiner Sonderkirche. Bonn, 1968.

84. Von Campenhausen, H., Ambrosius von Mailand als Kirchenpolitiker. Berlin, 1929.

85. _____, The Fathers of the Latin Church. London, 1964.

86. _____, Tradition and Life in the Church. Philadelphia, 1968.

87. Watkins, O. D., History of Penance, 2 vols. London, 1920. (reprint, New York, 1960).

88. Xiberta, B., Clavis Ecclesiae. Romae, 1922.

INTRODUCTION

The only way to study the penitential material of the fourth and fifth Centuries in the West must be by an historical analysis of its major authors. Our endeavor here is not simply historical but also theological, that is, we must try to come to a better comprehension of the major sacred signs of salvation as developed in the historical witness of the Western Church.

To understand is always to discern the intention beyond appearances and to discover this meaning from the expressions employed. Therefore the work necessary for comprehension is properly the domain of the word historically given us. This is above all true when we speak of the sacraments.

The meaning of the sacraments always remains something to be discovered again by each new generation. We must attempt by entering into the original thought of past generations to understand better what they meant by the expressions and words which they used to express their faith through the sacraments. Thus, the purpose of such research is not and can never be to "objectify" this historical intention or the structures in which Christians have manifested their intentions. In fact, man's intentions become evident to him in the structures he sets up to incarnate or express these intentions (liturgy). These intentions -- and therefore their meanings -- can be found only in a lived community as a sort of projected consciousness. Our effort must therefore be comprehensive if we wish to respect the object which we are investigating in the sacramental world. It is only in this way that we can discern the ties between the values and their expressional structures at any one historical period.

XUM

The sacraments for the Church are both liturgical and canonical institutions. They come across to us both as attitudes and as human actions. They bear within them certain ideas or reflections which are only partially thematized. Sacraments always appear as theological prolegomena for each generation.

Any serious study of the sacraments, therefore, must objectively study these diverse domains. This form of research or study, of course, can easily be abused by attempting a historical study "for the sake of history". Strictly speaking, this is not possible for a history of the sacraments. Yet, an historical evaluation is indispensable for any scientific research into the meaning and significance of the sacraments for the Christians of any one particular historical period. Therefore our study must of necessity be an historical investigation. Such an investigation is not done in order to "return to the sources", or for a love of antiquity for its own sake, but for the sole and logical reason that there is no other way of understanding the original intention of the Christian community of a past age. We do not seek to give "proofs" from antiquity that such and such a ritual, e.g. penance, is the same substantially today as it was in the fourth and fifth centuries, as has been the case so often in the past (apologetics).

Our study will encompass some of the historical evolution of penance in the fourth and fifth centuries in the Latin West as it was exercised by Ambrose, Leo I and the sermons on the reconciliation of penitents by the Archdeacon of Rome. Yet, this study is done insofar as the author is a theologian, that is, he is moved by a very determined intentionality from which comes the theological specificity of our study. In order to understand this, two points must be kept in mind:

XUM

--The first is that our critical study is to be conducted by putting within parenthesis the judgment concerning the value of the realities researched. The work becomes properly theological when we adhere to the realities which we are investigating and when we adopt these values for ourselves.

To adopt for ourselves the discovered intentionality means that we insert ourselves within the community of those who live these realities today; it also means that we integrate ourselves within a religious sphere where these rites are living realities. This religious adherence does not create these values but it does give us a new perspective not enjoyed by those who see in our study only an "historical essay." [1]

--Secondly, the thought of the theologian receives its true meaning only if it is a work of the Church, that is, if it is a work of faith. Adopting faith, reflecting on faith, the theologian must respect the object of faith necessary for salvation. A question which would be posed and treated while abstracting from the context of faith and salvation, would no longer be a theological question. As Vatican II was at pains to stress,[2] there is a necessary critique exercised by both historical and speculative pastoral theology. The theologian can never escape the

---

[1]History is never simply descriptive. It is always interpretive. In other words, a person must be involved in a particular reality in order to understand truly what it means for these people. To discern this meaning and write its history will always be a matter of interpretation and never simply one of description of the reality involved: "The Christian, therefore, even while using the most advanced methods of scholarship, will come to the understanding of the Church's history only if he interprets what happened in the light of a deeper dimension accessible to him by faith. An historian who operates out of a different set of presuppositions may agree with the Christian historian on a purely descriptive plane of what happened, but will inevitably differ from him in the understanding and evaluation of the Church's historical roots." G. Baum, Man Becoming (New York, 1970), pp. 12-13. Also cf. M. Blondel, The Letter on Apologetics and Dogma (London, 1964), pp. 27-58

[2]See in particular the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of Vatican II, par. 1.

pastorally "relevant" dimension of his work which he undertakes. Theology always has a primacy of the soteriological order.

In the present study, therefore, we have endeavored first of all to situate the sacrament of Penance as it comes through for us in some of the great Italian-Roman authors of the end of the fourth and fifth centuries. This was the period of the solidification of this sacrament where the role of the minister of penance became clear and comparatively well developed. Since there have been comparatively few historical studies done on this period and on these authors from the point of view of penance, we have tried to fill this lacuna in order to situate the development of penance and the role of the minister in penance in its own evolution. Only in this light can any profitable theological reflection take place.[3]

---

[3] The great exception to the Western writers on penance of this period not included here is Augustine. The reason for this is that the penitential doctrine of Augustine has already been written and need not be repeated here. We have, however, given a general view of his teaching on penance in Chapter I.

For some major studies on penance in Augustine see B. Poschmann, S. A. Augustini, Textus selecti de Paenitentia. Florilegium Patristicum, fasc: 38 (Bonn, 1934); M. F. Berrouard, "Pénitence de tous les jours selon saint Augustin," Lumière et Vie, n. 20, (Nov. - Dec. 1964), pp. 75-100; Am. La Bonnardière, "Pénitence et Réconciliation des Pénitents," Révue des Etudes Augustiniennes, 13 (1967), pp. 31-53.

XUM

Chapter I

A Short History of Penance

Before the reader enters the world of the fifth century penance in the West (Ambrose, Leo, the Roman Archdeacon, Jerome), it would be helpful for him to situate this period within the historical concept of penance itself. It is with this in mind that we have added this chapter on the history of penance.

The history of penance is one of the most complicated as well as the most illuminating of studies. It is complicated because the form in which the sacrament was administered for nearly 500 years was quite different from the form with which we are now acquainted. The evolution of the structures of this sacrament, at first glance, creates the impression that not only has the form changed but that the very sacrament itself is different today than it was in the first five centuries of the Church. This was at least the charge made by the non-Catholic liberal historians and scholars at the turn of the century.[1] Yet, a more detailed study of the historical sources of this sacrament will show beyond any shadow of doubt that the fundamental structure of the sacrament of penance remains essentially the same today as it was in the early centuries of the Church.[2]

---

[1] See the various works by Protestant scholars. A. Harnack, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, I. pp. 439-444. See also his Outline of the History of Dogma (Boston, 1957), pp. 399-405; O.D.Watkins, A History of Penance, I, pp. 103-126; R.C.Mortimer, The Origins of Private Penance, I (London, 1920)pp. 53-64.

[2] For our source material for this chapter we have used the translations of Paul F. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II (Westminster, 1959).

The work of such eminent Catholic scholars such as Morin,[3] Petau,[4] Poschmann,[5] Adam[6] and D'Ales[7] has proven this point beyond any reasonable doubt. The sacrament has undergone, then, a considerable evolution in its administration. It is only in the twelfth century (the early scholastic period) that we have a systematic and theological formulation of penance as a sacrament along with an analysis and description of its constitutive elements.[8] This is the form and elaboration with which we are acquainted today and which has remained rather stable in the West.[9]

EARLIEST TESTIMONIES

The earliest references to penance are very few in number before the third century.[10] The reason for this was probably the fervor of the

---

[3]See his now famous study in positive theology of the sacrament of penance, Commentarius Historicus de Disciplina in Administratione Sacramenti Poenitentiae, Tredecim Primis Saeculis in Ecclesia Occidentali et Hucusque in Orientali Observata (Paris, 1651).

[4]De Poenitentia Publica et Preparatione ad Communionem, in his Dogmata Theologica (Paris, 1867).

[5]A number of these works exist only in German: Die Abendländische Kirchenbusse in Früher Mittelalter (Breslau, 1930); Die Busse (Frieburg-im-Br.,1951); Poenitentia Secunda (Bonn, 1950); etc.

[6]Aux Origines du Sacrament de Pénitence (Romae, 1951); De Poenitentia Tractatus Dogmatico Historicus (Romae, 1950); L'Eglise et la Rémission des Péchés aux Premiers Siècles (Paris, 1952).

[7]His famous L'Edit de Calliste (Paris, 1913) was one of the main elements in the Catholic revival of historical studies on penance in the early Church.

[8]P. Anciaux, La Théologie du Sacrément de Pénitence au XII Siècle (Louvain, 1949), pp. 56-104; this work is probably the most complete study of the theological formulation of the sacrament of penance in the early scholastic period.

[9]P. Anciaux, Le Sacrément de la Pénitence (Louvain, 1960), pp. 53-64.

[10]P. Galtier, "La Pratique Penitentielle à l'Âge Apostolique," in his Aux Origines du Sacrément de Pénitence, pp. 62-106.

XUM

Christians who were frequently being persecuted throughout these years. To read the Epistles of St. Paul, one would think this to be true in spite of the fact that all was not perfect in these early Christian communities.[11] It can be said, however, that during this initial period, the times were those of Christian fervor where the discipline of penance was not in full vigor as deterrent to sin. This latter element will become more pronounced in later centuries.[12] The community was steeped in fraternal charity and therefore the spirit of forgiveness and clemency was more in vogue. This was the theme of the famous Catholic historian of penance, Jean Morin: "...if we turn our attention to the very beginning of the Church's history, we shall find that the attitude of the Church towards sinners is progressively more clement and lenient."[13]

Another strong reason for the surprising silence of these first years with regard to penance is the fact that it was simply accepted as part of the Christian life. It was a time of "peaceful possession", when no one doubted either its existence or its efficacy in the Church.[14] The documents on penance increase greatly only when it was attacked by the

---

[11] See 1 Cor 5:1-5 where St. Paul actually excommunicated a public sinner; many authors claim that this is the same person whom Paul reconciles in 2 Cor 2:6-8; for concensus of opinion see the monumental work on the subject by E.B. Allo, Première Epître aux Corinthiens (Paris, 1956), pp. 121-127.

[12] Father Galtier would seem to hold the opposite view, op. cit., pp. 12-16; Morin is of the same opinion as the present author. Cf. Morin, op. cit., IV, IX, 1.

[13] Morin, ibid., p. 87

[14] J. Lebreton and J. Zeiller, Histoire de l'Église, de la Fin du 2 Siècle a la Paix Constantinienne, II (Paris, 1948), pp. 353-360.

Montanist and Novatian heretics of the third and fourth centuries. It was only natural, then, in view of these errors that the Fathers would come to the doctrinal defense of penance as an institution.

In any case, one of the earliest documents on penance is that of The Shepherd of Hermas about the year 140.[15] The value of this document lies in the witness it gives of the Roman practice of penance in the early second century. The document shows that the Church was not just simply the "Church of saints" from which sinners were excluded. On the contrary, the subject of part of this document is to offer hope of pardon even to those Christians who, although regenerated once in baptism, have fallen into some grievous sins:[16]

> I have heard, sir, said I, from certain teachers that there is no other repentance than the one when we went down into the water and received remission for our former sins. He said to me, you have heard correctly for so it is. He who has received remission of sin ought never to sin again, but to live in purity. But since you ask diligently about all things, I will explain this also to you, not as giving excuse to those who in the future shall believe or to those who already believe in the Lord. For those who already have believed or are about to believe have no repentance or sins, but have remission of their former sins...the Lord therefore being full of mercy and compassion on this creation has established this repentance. But I tell you, said he, after that great and solemn calling, if a man should be tempted by the devil and sin, he has one repentance. But if he sin repeatedly and repent, it is unprofitable for such a man for hardly shall he live...[17]

From this passage, it is evident that there is a power in the Church to forgive serious sin committed after baptism. This forgiveness is not restricted to so-called "irremissible sins," but the document expressly

---

15 The Shepherd of Hermas, ed. Funk, I, 362, 394, 396.

16 J. Quasten, Patrology, I (Westminster, Md., 1950), pp. 98-99.

17 The Shepherd..., I, 394.

mentions two sins which later heretics will claim are not within the power of the Church to forgive: adultery and apostasy. "Those, then who are willing to do penance, will be strong in faith." And to the husband of the woman who has committed adultery, the Angel of the Shepherd admonishes him "to take her back, after penance has been performed."

The reconciliation of the sinner is in the power of the Church. In other words, to be pleasing to God, sinners must be once again incorporated into the Church from which they have been somehow cast out by their sins: "If they fail to be integrated into the Tower (the Church) they will be permanently rejected. For this reason (sin) they have been rejected and cast aside from the tower. Those, then who are willing to do penance if they actually perform it will be strong in the faith if they do penance now while the tower is being built. But if the tower is finished, there is no longer a place for them, instead they will be outcast."[18] The doctrine of penance in Hermas is already thoroughly permeated with the idea that the Church is an instrument necessary for salvation. The author of this treatise goes on to speak of the prayer offered for sinners by the elders of the Church, and it is very likely that reconciliation with and through the Church is at least implicit in this prayer.[19] This, however, is uncertain.

The most serious problem which confronts Catholic historians of penance of this period is the unicity of penance (i.e. could be performed

---

[18] ibid., 362.

[19] P. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology, II, Sacraments and forgiveness, p. 12; A. D'Ales, op. cit., p. 112.

but once) in the early Church. This problem is not restricted to Hermas but becomes a part and parcel of the whole penitential discipline of the early Church. Could serious sins (adultery, idolatry and murder) be repented for just once? If a Christian who had done penance for one of these crimes committed the same crime, was he forever excluded from reconciliation with the Church and therefore with God? This is probably the most perplexing problem for any historian of penance. Catholic authors are divided on this point, but there seems to be strong evidence that these three sins were accorded only one forgiveness.[20] If these sins were committed again, sinners were not forgiven but left to the mercy of God.[21] The reason for this single opportunity of penance (as in our present text) is more psychological than doctrinal. "The pastoral difficulty of encouraging sin by stressing the possibility of pardon was sensed more acutely in the early Church and may explain much of the harsher legislation in the early discipline of penance."[22] Yet, we will notice a tendency to greater clemency for all types of sinners, even for those who had fallen more than once into these three gravest sins. We must admit, however, that "it is the absence of a private penitential discipline even for lesser sins that led to the complete decadence of morals in the fifth and sixth centuries and to the almost complete abandonment of the sacra-

---

[20] G.H. Joyce, "Private Penance in the early Church," in Journal of Theological Studies, 42 (1953) 22-26.

[21] See the texts of Popes Innocent L and Leo I which we shall cite later in this chapter. But even in these cases, viaticum was not denied at the point of death.

[22] Palmer, op. cit., p. 14.

XUM

ment as the ordinary remedy for sin to be made use of in time of health."[23] It would seem, however, that penance for these major sins could be performed but once.

A second important witness of the early Church is the story told by Clement of Alexandria. Whether it be true or not (Clement attests to its truthfulness) it shows at least the attitude of the Church toward sinners at the very beginning of the third century (215). The story is told that St. John, after his release from the island of Patmos, visited the city of Ephesus where he had earlier entrusted a promising young man to the care of the bishop. It seems that the young man became involved with a band of robbers and was made their chief. On hearing what had happened, St. John sent out to find the young man, whereupon he was taken prisoner by the robbers and taken to their leader who, upon recognizing St. John, sought to flee. He was overtaken by the Apostle and led back to penance.

> When the old man approached, the robber embraced him, confessing the while as best he could with loud sobs and concealing his right hand (a figure for his sins) he was baptized anew in his tears. Then he (St. John), so they say, assured him on oath that he had found pardon for him from the Savior, and knelt and kissed his hand as now cleansed by his repentance, and led him back to the Church. And then making supplication with a wealth of prayers, he vied with him in protracted fasts, and soothing his troubled mind with many words, he did not leave him, so they say, until he had reestablished him in the Church...[24]

The apostle vied in fasts until he "was re-established in the Church." This presupposes that this was in some way connected with the fact that John "had found pardon for him from the Savior."

---

[23] P. Palmer, "Jean Morin and Private Penance," in Theological Studies 6 (Sept. 1945), 356.

[24] Who is the Rich Man That is Saved? (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Drei Jahrhunderten XVII, 190).

XUM

It is interesting to note two things about the story: even as late as the third century this story forms abundant evidence that the Church reconciled a murderer to herself. This will serve as direct evidence against Tertullian and the Montanists who made the novel distinction between remissible and irremissible sins. In reality, then, it is the heretics who introduce a nontraditional distinction in this regard. The second point in question brought out by this story is that the sinner is reconciled to the Church, the understood sign of God's own pardon (at least that is presupposed by the author of the story). Yet, it remains true that Clement is also a witness to the unicity of penance in the Church and its growing rigorism in the matter of penitential discipline. It would be too tedious to cite all the texts in this regard.

The beginning of the third century witnesses the rise of the first heresies which denied various elements of the penitential discipline.[25] Montanism and Novatianism, two rigorist heresies, denied that the Church has received the power to forgive the "irremissible" sins (adultery, idolatry, and murder).

Montanism was essentially an ecclesiological heresy putting prophetism above the episcopal hierarchy. The heresy was founded in Phrygia about the year 170 by Montanus, who was favored with various mystical ecstasies. The disciples (notably women) were supposed to communicate directly with the Spirit in various states of ecstatic trances. The normal outcome

---

[25] For a history of these heresies see F. Cayre, Manual of Patrology and History of Theology, I (Paris, 1935), pp. 250-254; J. Leberton and J. Zeiller, Histoire..., pp. 35-41; also superficial work of H. Lietzmann, A History of the Early Church, I (New York, 1961), pp. 227-257.

was that the spirit ruled the community directly by these illuminated prophets (pneumatics) and not through the normally constituted episcopal hierarchy in the Church (psychics, numerum Episcoporum). Thus prophetism is put above the hierarchy. A second element in their doctine was a belief in the imminent Parousia, or the second coming of Christ. It will be remembered that the belief characterized various communities which St. Paul himself had to correct (2 Thes 2:1-8; 3:3-13). In any case, this belief naturally led to rigorism in matters of penance and matrimony. Second marriages were branded as adultery and "unforgivable" sins were introduced into the penitential discipline.

The most famous convert to this heresy was the great lawyer and apologist, Tertullian. As a Catholic, he wrote a treatise on penance called De Poenitentia, in which the normal Catholic teaching is given.[26] It reflects a spirit of clemency which was in the tradition of the first two centuries. He makes no distinction between forgivable and unforgivable sins and exhorts all to penance no matter what their sins might have been. "He (Christ) reproves those of Pergamum for teaching perverse doctrines; He castigates those of Laodicea for putting trust in riches. And yet He exhorts all to penance, even under threat. Now He would not threaten the impenitent unless He were ready to forgive the penitent."[27] Tertullian goes on to explain that penance, however, must be done in the Church and

---

[26] See the introduction and commentary on these treatises by W.P. LeSaint, Tertullian: Treatises on Penance (Ancient Christian Writers, 1959).

[27] On Penance, trans. by W.P. LeSaint, op. cit., p. 30.

it is the Church who forgives through the exomologesis or confession. It is uncertain whether it was made to the whole congregation or, as is more likely, to the bishop. In any case, the penitent must confess in the Church. "The body cannot rejoice over the misery of one of its members, rather the whole body must suffer and work together for the cure. The Church is present in one and the next, and the Church is truly Christ... Is it better to be damned in secret than to be absolved in public?"[28] This confession is not simply an external formula empty of efficacy; rather it reaches to the depths of the soul, forgiving the eternal punishment which has been incurred by grievous sin: "...that by passing judgment on the sinner, it (exomologesis) may of itself act as a substitute for God's wrath, and by temporal punishment, I will not say frustrate, but rather discharge the eternal penalties."[29]

Tertullian as a Montanist, will deny the truth of what he has written as a Catholic. In his treatise On Modesty he says: "I am no longer ashamed of my error, which I have rejected, since I rejoice in having rejected it, and find myself the better and the purer for having done so... No one is ashamed of having taken a step forward."[30] His wrath is directed against the so-called "edict of Callistus," probably of the bishop of Rome, who claimed to absolve even adulterers after penance had been performed. We shall not enter into Tertullian's invective, but the treatise serves a valuable purpose for the history of the early penitential discipline. Indirectly, it shows us the Catholic

---

[28] Ibid., p. 31.

[29] Ibid.

[30] On Modesty, trans. by W.P. Le Saint, op. cit., p. 55.

position through Tertullian's attacks.[31] The Catholic position is that all sins can find pardon since all sinners are encouraged to do penance. Thus the Catholic position, which Tertullian attacks, is based on the doctrine of the keys which were given to Peter and the Apostles and by them to their successors, the bishops of the Catholic Church.

Tertullian's distinction between forgivable and unforgivable sins confronts us with something entirely new, something without precedent in the primitive penitential discipline. Tertullian introduces an unheard-of distinction among sins; as we saw, it was a logical deduction from the Montanist rigorism in matters of penance. Yet, on the other hand, the heresy could not have been entirely new since it was argued and accepted by a great number of former Catholics turned Montanist or Novatian; the problem is solved if we consider that all during the primitive history of penance, the unicity of penance for these three major crimes (crimina) was a strict canonical rule. It is evident, then, that the Montanist and Novatian heretics had but one step to take: to claim that this rigorism was not a disciplinary function but one of doctrine. Thus, with this precedent in the primitive discipline, it is easy to see how logical the claim of the heretics sounded to many Catholics: the Church in reality had received no power to forgive these three major crimes. Tertullian claims God alone, not the bishops of the Catholic Church, can forgive sins. "For the right and the decision (to forgive sins) belongs to the Lord, and not to the servant, to God Himself, not to the priest."[32]

---

31 Palmer, op. cit., p. 27.

32 On Modesty (ed. Rauschen, Florilegium Patristicum, 10, 31-96).

XUM

Tertullian thus serves as one of the surest witnesses of the penitential practice of the Catholic Church in the early third century; the Church can reconcile all sinners to itself after penance in virtue of the divine power given to the bishops of the Catholic Church to bind and loose.

Our final witness of this early period is Cyprian.[33] To state the case to the point of oversimplification, Cyprian progressed in his thought concerning the forgiveness of the three major sins.[34] In one of his earlier epistles, he says that "certain bishops thought that it was impossible to reconcile (dare pacem) an adulterer. But as long as they respect the unity of the Church, each Bishop is free as to how he himself acted, since he is responsible for his acts." In other words, Cyprian clearly distinguishes between theory and practice. In theory, the Church had the power to reconcile such sinners. In practice, it was up to the injured bishops, responsible before God, to act more or less severly according to the circumstances. The principle reason for rigorism was that it would act as a deterrent to others. In his other writings, Cyprian himself allowed a time for penance followed by reconciliation for adulterers. Cyprian, furthermore, distinguishes between the sins against men and the sins against God. These latter (apostasy, idolatry) were not

---

[33] For text of the Lapsed see the introduction and translation by M. Bevenot (Ancient Christian Writers, N. 25). For other texts see Palmer, op. cit., pp. 42-47; B. Poschmann, Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV, 3, and in his Poenitentia Secunda, pp. 398-424.

[34] K. Rahner, "Die Busslehre des. hl. Cyprian Von Karthago," in ZKT, 74, (1952), 257-276.

XUM

reconciled. It is commonly agreed among scholars that prior to the Decian persecution, Cyprian regarded these sins as irremissible. But with the outbreak of that persecution, Cyprian ceased to act according to his personal views, and, as we shall see, even the apostates were later exhorted to penance and pardon.[35]

During the terrible persecution of Decius (250) many Catholics fell away either by openly and freely sacrificing to the gods (sacrificati quasi sponte) or by doing so under violence (sacrificati sub violentia). Finally there was the third category of those who had obtained a false statement saying that they had done so (libellati).

Cyprian was faced with a difficult situation but he objected to the many priests who were granting reconciliation to these lapsed. In his absence, they were reconciling these lapsed without penance, and what is worse, without permission of the bishop, who alone can reconcile sinners: "I hear that some of the presbyters are neither mindful of the gospel nor do they consider what the martyrs have written to me, nor do they reserve to the bishop the honor of his priesthood and chair, but they have already begun to communicate the lapsed and to give them the Eucharist. Where it was proper they should have attained all this through approved procedure."[36] Cyprian goes on to explain that the procedure is confession (exomologesis) followed by penance and reconciliation. Even the recommendation of those who suffered for the faith (the confessors) given to the lapse for their reconciliation was nothing more than a recommendation to the bishop. Final

---

[35] M. Bevenot, "Sacrament of Penance and St. Cyprian's 'De Lapsis'," Theological Studies, 16 (1955), 189-196.

[36] Epistle 17 (CSEL, 3, 522).

XUM

reconciliation is reserved to the bishop alone. Cyprian says this: "And so direct letters (i.e., those of the confessors) to us in conformity with faith and discipline."

Cyprian then awaited a general council of bishops who would settle the matter. This council met at Carthage in 251, and after reading Sacred Scripture favoring both forgiveness and severity, the council decided that (1) hope should never be taken away from any of the lapsed, (2) the libellati were to be reconciled immediately after a severe penance, (3) the sacrificati of both groups only at the hour of their death.[37] In 252, however, at the Second Council of Carthage, the question of doctrine, as such, was raised. Here there was no doubt that the Church of Africa maintained that in principle all sins -- of whatever nature (in hominem et in Deum) were within the power of the keys of the Church. Reconciliation was promised to all the lapsed who would do penance. The proof adduced by the African bishops was the famous text of Mt. 16-18: "Whatever you shall lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven...."

The doctrine of Cyprian is therefore a further clarification of the Church's power to reconcile and forgive sinners by virtue of the power given the bishops of the Catholic Church. Some Catholics have claimed that this reconciliation was of a purely external nature, a reconciliation which had no real effect on the internal condition of the sinner. This notion, however, is in complete contradiction to all the evidence we have. For Tertullian this penance and reconciliation remitted even eternal punishment, and this is to say that it has a real internal effect.

---

[37] Epistle 55 (CSEL, 3, 641ff.). See also B. Poschmann, "Die Dogmatischen Voraussetzungen der Cyprianischen Busspraxis," in Zeitschrift für Kath. Theologie, 37 (1913), 244-265.

XUM

Cyprian argues again and again from the text of St. Matthew that what the bishops do on earth will be done in heaven and that, if they reconcile a sinner, so does God. This is axiomatic with Cyprian. "Nothing could be more paradoxical, for the whole treatise (De Lapsis) is to exhort those who had fallen from the Church in the persecution of Decius to submit to the penance expected of them by the Church, so that they might be reconciled by the Church through the imposition of the bishop's hands and then re-admitted to Holy Communion."[38] And again, in another work written directly against Novatian heretics, Ad Novatianum , Cyprian says: "For what has been justly refused in this life cannot be granted hereafter. For it is here, as the Lord has said, that sins are either bound or loosed; in the hereafter there will be nothing else but reward or condemnation. For everyone who is justly condemned here, cannot be numbered among the elect or be worthy of the life to come." [39]

Conclusion from this Period. It is clear that our evidence for the penitential discipline is not very extensive; but from what we have, we can deduce all the elements necessary for showing us that all the essential elements are here present for the sacrament of penance.

1. The Church is composed of both saints and sinners. Nothing could be further from the truth than to say that sinners are excluded from its community. The invitation to penance in all of these documents we have examined presupposes this fact.

2. The Church has the power to forgive (reconcile) every type of

---

[38] M. Bevenot , art. cit., p. 175.

[39] Contra Novatianum (P.L., 35, c. 2305).

sinner; moreover, in the tradition of the Church, no real evidence can be adduced to prove the contention of Tertullian that certain sins could not be forgiven. Adultery was reconciled in The Shepherd of Hermas; a murderer is reconciled in the story of Clement of Alexandria; and finally, those who had apostatized from the faith are given hope of forgiveness in the texts of St. Cyprian.

3. Forgiveness by the Church is so powerful that it attains the internal guilt and sinful condition of the penitent. It was not simply an external absolution from ecclesiastical censures, but a reconciliation that was recognized as reconciliation with God. The text which is habitually used is that of Mt. 16:18.

4. This power of forgiveness is directly given to the bishops of the Church in general. This was the Catholic doctrine as it is given indirectly by Tertullian in his attacks on the Catholic Church. This doctrine emerges even more clearly from St. Cyprian for whom this element of penance is axiomatic. This is such a reality for him that not even the pleas and recommendation of the confessors and martyrs were sufficient to forgive sins; their petitions must be presented to the bishop who alone can reconcile sinners to the Church.

5. Because of an increasingly rigoristic attitude, the penitential discipline can be received but once in the Church and for this reason will become a great pastoral problem in later centuries. In reality, the problem will not be cleared up until the introduction of private penance by the Irish missionaries of the sixth and seventh centuries. Various councils such as that held at Elvira (305) will legislate in a more rigorist vein, but the doctrinal foundation remains clear. During the times of persecution, the temptation to apostatize was great; stern

measures, it was thought, had to be taken to strengthen the resolve of Christians. This policy toward sinners was, however, a matter of discipline and not of doctrine.

II. THE PRACTICE OF PENANCE IN ST. AUGUSTINE

The clearest picture of ecclesiastical penance during this early patristic period is given by St. Augustine of Hippo (died 430).[40] His doctrine is spread through many of his writings, but it always remains essentially the same: The Church in the person of her bishop can and does reconcile sinners (of whatever nature) to herself and therefore with God. The power of the bishops is so great that whatever is done on earth will also be done in heaven.

We find this doctrine of St. Augustine well illustrated in one of his epistles where he describes the different forms of penance in the Church (he calls them actiones poenitentiae). He first argues that there are three such forms of penance in Holy Scripture. Augustine then goes on to describe these various forms of penance in the Church:[41]

1. The first form is that which is done before baptism (it must be remembered that it was customary in Augustine's day to baptize mostly

---

[40] Palmer, op. cit., pp. 96-109; P. Anciaux, Le Sacrément de la Pénitence, pp. 57-64; Latin texts collected in Enchiridion Theologicum Sancti Augustini (BAC, N. 205), pp. 620-626; K. Adam, Die Kirchliche Sündenvergeburtg Nach dem hl. Augustin, pp. 17-26; F. Hunermann, Die Busslehre des Heiligen Augustinus, pp. 50-68.

[41] Sermo 351 (P.L., 38, C. 1535 - 1549) and Sermo 352 (P.L. 38, C. 1549-1560).

adults[42] as a preparation for entrance into the Church). He tells us that, by this penance, sorrow is followed by joy, putting off the old man in order to enter into the new, thus following Christ's injunction: "Repent and be baptized, for the Kingdom is at hand." "Every man, in fact, who is free at the moment when this sacrament of the faithful is given, cannot enter a new life without repenting of his former existence."

2. The second type of penance is that which is done for our daily sins which, he says, even the bishops commit. And for that reason, we must all strike our breasts in the mea culpa of the Confiteor at daily Mass. Here, St. Augustine gives the traditional ways of expiating these sins: alms, good works, prayer, etc: "Is it not for this reason that each day we strike our breast? Is it not for this reason that even we bishops do this each day as we ascend the altar? It is thus as saying each day of our lives: Forgive us our trespasses."

3. The third and last type is the "canonical penance," i.e., a public penance which must be performed for grave sins against the Decalogue, which have inflicted a grave wound. "This penance is painful. The wound is grave, an adultery has been committed, perhaps a murder or sacrilege! The case is grave, the wound serious, dangerous, mortal but the doctor (God) is all powerful." St. Augustine goes on to say that in this case there are three essential parts of the canonical penance which must be performed by the penitent in union with the Church to

---

[42] See Augustine's own Confessions, Bk. 4, Ch. 6; J. Jeremias, Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries (London, 1959), pp. 24-42 and abundant bibliography therein.

obtain God's forgiveness.[43] These are:

a) Confession. The man must judge himself severly and this constitutes a condemnation of his own sins. "In this judgment, the man ought to judge himself severly in order that, having judged himself, he will not be judged by God... Man must create a tribunal against himself... which is the conscience that tells him his sins are his accuser... He must fear because his sins have made him God's enemy."[44]

b) Excommunication. This accusation cannot remain interior and secret. It must become external in a public recognition of his sin. The penitent must voluntarily separate himself from the Eucharist banquet of which he has rendered himself unworthy. This liturgical separation expresses and admits his separation from the community of the faithful. But this voluntary excommunication must be ratified by the hierarchy. This separation is necessary so that the penitent may come to the forgiveness of his sins and to the reconciliation with God. This power of the bishops is founded on the promise by Christ to the Apostles and their successors. Thus, they, who have been placed over the sacraments (the bishops), alone are to reconcile the sinner to the Church and to God. The penitent must submit to their judgment to escape divine condemnation.

---

43 We may note even here the three essential notes present in the penance in St. Augustine and traditional in the Church: (1) the part of the sinner (2) the part of the Church -- hierarchy and faithful, (3) the part of God in forgiveness.

44 We see here the eschatological aspect of penance in the anticipated judgment of the penitent by himself -- thereby escaping the definitive judgment by God on the last day.

> He who is encompassed by the chains of sins so dangerous cannot hesitate or defer to have recourse to the power of the leaders of the Church, by whom he will be delivered on earth in order that they (his sins) be not held in heaven... Thus after having brought against himself this condemnation let him present himself to the bishops, by whom is exercised in the Church the power of the keys. And beginning once again to become a submissive son, respectful of the place of the members of the community, he will accept the satisfaction determined by them who are the prepositi sacramentorum...

This confession of sin did not have to be public, but the expiation itself always had a public character.[45] This is an important element both in St. Augustine and in all the earlier tradition of the penitential discipline. We speak of "public" and "private" penance today. This terminology should be understood as it was used by St. Augustine and in earlier texts which we have already cited. The work of Father Galtier has been very helpful in clarifying this terminology of the early Church. The terms "public" and "private," as they apply to penance, refer not to the confession of sins, for this was always private, nor to the element of reconciliation, which was public in both St. Augustine and in other representatives of early tradition. In the early centuries of the Church, then, or up to the eighth century, satisfaction for sins and reconciliation to the Church and to God will always have a more or less public character. The penitent was always free to announce his sins in public -- and we have cases on record where this was done -- but we also know that it was not required. Later, Leo I would forbid any priest or bishop to

---

[45] Grotz, Die Entwicklung des Busstufenwesens in der Vormcänischen Kirche (Freiburg-in-Br., 1955), p. 87. See also: Poschmann, "Die Kirchliche Vermittlung der Sündervergebung nach Augustinus," in Zeitschrift für Theo. Kath., 45 (1921), 498: "The sacramental effect of ecclesial forgiveness is essentially the lifting of the excommunication from the sinner and his re-incorporation into the grace-dispensing community of the Church."

XUM

make any confession of sin public. In any case, the essential power of the Church to reconcile sinners to herself and, by that fact, to God, remains always the same. Whether the Church saw fit to exercise this power in public or in a more "private" way really makes little difference to the essential aspects of this power.

c) Satisfaction. The third stage is reached when confession and excommunication are duly imposed by the bishop, placing the penitent among the special class of the ordo poenitentium, i.e. the group of those who were performing some penance imposed by the Church. "If his sin was not only a grave sin but a public scandal for others, and if the bishop judged it would be useful for the Church that he do penance publicly and perhaps in view of everyone, let him accept that decision without hesitation in order not to add to his wounds, already dangerous and mortal, the infection of shame." As we have already mentioned, secret sins did not have to be publicly confessed or known unless they were already known in public. In any case, whether the sin was public or private, the penitent had to have recourse to the bishop for his forgiveness and be submissive to his judgment and do public penance. After having completed this penance, with the help of the whole community who prays for him and under the authority and conduct of the bishop, the penitent is reconciled with the community and re-admitted to the Eucharist banquet. Such is the end of this official penance, being consummated by this new intervention of the authority of the Church, the sign and guarantee of the penitent's reconciliation with God.

As did St. Cyprian, St. Augustine justified this power of the bishop to forgive and reconcile by the texts of Mt. 16:18 and Jn 20:23.

XUM

Here we find a description of the power of the keys given to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops. We must also note the part of the whole community in the forgiveness of sins. It was the bishop alone who reconciled, but it was the whole body of the faithful who was to pray for the whole ordo poenitentium.[46]

It is evident then, from these texts of St. Augustine that, in his thought, reconciliation to the Church in the person of the bishop, with the faithful aiding by their prayers, was of itself reconciliation with God because "whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." In another epistle, St. Augustine said, "Therefore Christ said to the ministers of His Church: 'What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven'; you by whom hands are imposed on penitents."[47] St. Augustine explicityly tells us that this was the common practice in all the churches -- in omnibus ecclesiis.[48]

This penance described for us by St. Augustine is very telling. The sinner must accuse himself both before God and before the Church. The excommunication which is meted out to him is of a medicinal nature.

---

[46] In many respectes, this important aspect of ecclesial penance has not been underlined enough in modern preaching and teaching. We tend to think of "confession", "expiation" as purely private affairs, whereas in reality it is of the greatest importanct that the faithful pray for all the sinners in the Church. This will be brought out in more detail later in our study of the Roman Archdeacon.

[47] G. Morini, Miscellanea Augustiniana (Romae, 1930), p. 358.

[48] Ep. 265 (P.L., 55, c. 108). For an even more direct text, cf. Contra Crescenium Donat., II, 12, 16: "The City of God by receiving sinners makes them innocent." Even Galtier has to admit that "there can be no remission of sin except in and through the Church" as his judgment of St. Augustine's thought. Cf. De Poenitentia, Tractatus Dogmatico-Historicus, p. 132.

XUM

It is intended to bring about his healing. It is imposed by the ecclesiastical authority and its end is to make the guilty man reflect on and repent of his sins. St. Augustine quotes 1 Cor 5:2, where St. Paul excommunicated the incestuous man in order that he may return, healed, to the Christian flock. It should be pointed out that this excommunication should not be confused with the disciplinary excommunication, later developed, which was used by the Church to punish serious external breaches of God's law. In any case, the medicinal excommunication to which St. Augustine refers is from Eucharist in the sense of "not to go to Communion" (ex-Communio). The penitent, fearing a final separation from the Kingdom of heaven, was to separate himself for a time from the Eucharistic table.[49]

Finally, the satisfaction imposed by the bishop takes on two particular aspects. While performing satisfaction, the penitent belongs to a special class in the Church called the ordo poenitentium (the order of penitents), the group performing penance for their sins. It is a satisfaction imposed by the bishop who has the power of the keys in the Church. This satisfaction not only serves as a personal remedy, but also as an example to others: "He has committed a sin which is not only grave for himself but which also constitutes a source of scandal for others; therefore if the bishop judges it useful or necessary to impose a public penance on the guilty man, this latter should not refuse, but perform the penance in order not to add a sin of false pride to an already grave situation."[50] It can never be known if a penitent will have enough courage to undergo a penance. It is a responsibility that is incumbent on the whole community as such, not just the penitent. The fraternal element of the community of the whole Body of the Church is thus brought

---

[49] P. Anciaux, op. cit., p. 88.
[50] Sermo 351 (P.L., 39, c. 1536-1538).

out in these communal prayers for sinners. Reconciliation accomplished by the bishop is reconciliation with God.

Reconciliation with God, the complete cure of a man's sin, is attained by submission to ecclesial penance. The reconciliation with the Church is the efficacious sign of the peace and gift of the Holy Spirit, who reestablishes the gifts of baptism which were lost by sin. The accent, then, was put on the importance and the necessity of this submission to the official penance of the Church.[51]

With St. Augustine then, we have a complete synthesis of penance in the early Church. In it, we see all the elements of the divine power of the Church to reconcile sinners with God Himself. The evolution of the sacraments of penance has reached its clearest evolution in the description given us by St. Augustine of Hippo. With his witness, we may be permitted to conclude our study of penance in the early patristic period.

---

[51] St. Augustine describes the dangerous plight of those who are bound (ligati) in sin. When the Vandals were attacking Africa, St. Augustine urges the ministers of the Church to remain at their posts so as to be able to reconcile sinners and the dying. Otherwise -- and Augustine is very explicit -- they will be in danger of eternal damnation unless they are reconciled. To be reconciled therefore is to escape this eternal damnation. See Epistle 228, 8 (P.L., 33, c. 1016).

XUM

CHAPTER II

PENANCE IN AMBROSE

1. Chronology of the Works of Ambrose

The following works will be used to investigate in depth the meaning of penance in Ambrose. Throughout our study, we have used the critical texts of Ambrose which are, unfortunately, not complete.[1] Bibliography for our author is also abundant.[2]

The works dealing with penance in Ambrose can be broken down into two sections: One, dealing with those works written entirely or in part on penance itself; the other, dealing with those works which only occasionally mention penance.[3]

(a) Works written entirely or in part on penance, which are mutually interpretative:

1. Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam (written in 389). The work is a collection of homilies. Book VII, written in 386, is dedicated entirely to penance and will interest us here (VII, 49, 79-84, 207-243). We shall also note books V, 1-15, 89-92; VIII, 21-11, 72; and X, 72-93. Edition: Corpus Christianorum (afterwards written CC), vol. 14 and Sources Chrétiennes (afterwards written SC), vols. 45 and 52; cf. Palanque, Saint Ambroise, pp. 529-536.

2. De Paenitentia (written between 386-390). This work takes up many of the texts of the Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam and seems to summarize them. The work itself was clearly polemical against the Novatians, but it also contains the pastoral preoccupations of Ambrose

---

[1] Cf. bibliography on pp. 9 - 10.

[2] ibid. pp. 14 - 19.

[3] This will be the object of the whole present study. We shall indicate this as we develop our thought.

with regard to the faithful of Milan. Ambrose reveals himself here both serious with regard to penance and merciful to penitents. Edition is from the Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (afterwards written CSEL), vol. 73, pp. 117-206.

3. Expositio Psalmi CXVIII (written after 387). This work is a collection of homilies. On confession: 3, 10; 7, 21; on the liberation from the bonds of sin: 8, 41-48; on the sacerdotal power: 10, 17; 8, 26. Edition: CSEL, vol. 62; cf. Palanque, Saint Ambroise, pp. 524-525.

4. Epistola 51 (written in September, 390). This letter addresses itself to the Emperor Theodosius in order to call him to penance for the massacre at Thessalonica. Edition: Patrologia Latina (afterwards written PL) 16; cf. Palanque, op. cit., pp. 536-539. As we have said, this portion of penance in Ambrose is of little interest to us in our study.

5. Explanatio super Psalmos XII (explanations of psalms 36-41 which were written after 390). This work is a collection of homilies which is directly pastoral in nature. The Explanatio super Psalmum 37 is consecrated to the forma poenitentiae but contains in fact very few indications on ecclesial penance. This part of the book, however, was written later than the De Paenitentia (about 397) by the witness of Ambrose himself.[4] The Explanatio super Psalmum 38, 37-38, treats of the sacerdotal power in the reconciliation of the penitent. Edition: CSEL, vol. 64.

6. De Apologia Prophetae David (written between 383-390). Most probably this work was written anterior to 390 and not addressed to

---

[4] "De paenitentia duos jam dudum scripsi libellos et iterum scribendum arbitror". Cf. Exp. ps. XXXVIII, I, CSEL, 64, p. 136.

the emperor. It deals with penance in general. Edition: CSEL, vol. 32/2, pp. 299-355; cf. Palanque, op. cit., pp. 520-521.

7. Epistola 26. Ambrosius Ireneo (no date). The work is against the death penalty given by certain bishops as a penance (this epistle should be read along with Epistola 25, on the mercy of Christian judges).[5] Edition: PL 16.

8. Epistola 67 Ambrosius Simpliciano (without date). A work written against the ease with which some priests gave penance. Edition: PL 16, C. 1228-2131.

(b) Works which only occasionally mention the role of the priest in penance:

1. De Cain et Abel (written about 377). This work deals with the office of binding and forgiving. Cf. II, 4, 15, Edition: CSEL, vol. 32/1, pp. 337-409; cf. Palanque, op. cit., p. 493.

2. De Helia et Ieiunio (written between 386-389). This work has to do with the non-acceptance of persons in doing penance, cf. 22, 82. Edition: CSEL, vol. 32/2, pp. 409-465; cf. Palanque, op. cit., pp. 527-529.

3. De Spiritu Sancto (written at the beginning of 381). This is a properly theological work directed against the Arians. In this work, we find some allusions to penance. Ambrose clearly teaches here that the power of the priest to remit sin comes directly from God, III, 18, 137-138. Edition: PL 16, C. 808-809; cf. CSEL 79, p. 15* - 17*.

4. De Officiis Ministrorum (written after the spring of 368). In particular II, 27, 135. This work has to do with the bishop as the

---

[5] Cf. J. R. Palanque, "Deux Correspondants de Saint Ambroise: Orotien et Irénée", Rev. et Lat., (1933), 153-163 says that these epistles were written between 390-393.

good physician. Edition: PL 16, C. 139; Palanque, op. cit., pp. 526-527.

5. Exameron (written after 386, perhaps in 387). This is a sermon on Maundy Thursday which was the day for the reconciliation of penitents. Edition: CSEL, vol. 32/1, pp. 1-216; cf. P. Courcelle, Recherches sur les confessions de Saint Augustin (Paris, 1950), pp. 93-106.

6. De Obitu Theodosii (written in 395). Edition: CSEL, 73, p. 115*, pp. 369-401.

2. INTRODUCTION TO OUR STUDY OF AMBROSE

In this general introduction we simply give an overall view of Ambrose on penance. In the following sections, we shall go into detail as to the role of the minister in penance.

As a general statement, the work of Ambrose on penance is not an extraordinary one in that he simply follows the penitential usages of western penance in vogue at the time. When a Christian confessed his grave sins, he was put by the minister among the ordo poenitentium. As such, he was excluded from the Eucharist while he did the penance imposed upon him (agere poenitentiam).[6] After the specified time of penance, he was readmitted to the Eucharist with the clear implication that his sins were in fact forgiven. Moreover, this public penance could be done only once with the result that many put it off until old age or death itself.

The function of the priest in penance was to aid the Christian to recognize his sin and to want to do penance for it. This was to be done above all in preaching against vices and sins. The priest must even rebuke Christians individually if their sins were public and notorious (corripere, correptio). The reaction against the priest for doing this could be strong and vigorous, particularly on the part of the rich and the well-to-do. The priest must not respect persons in any way in carrying out his charge since he was so mandated by God. Ambrose himself had to do this very firmly in the celebrated case of the emperor.

---

[6] De Paenit.,I, 37, 52, 59, 81, 90.

Theodosius after the massacre of Thessalonica.[7]

The penitent must first come to the priest in order to confess his sins and to ask penance of the priest (petere paenitentiam).[8] Yet, the nature of this confession is not all that clear in Ambrose. A confession of sins is necessary for the sinner's forgiveness, but it is uncertain whether this is meant either as a precise enumeration of sins to the priest, or to God in the depths of one's heart, or by submitting to the penitential rite imposed (which itself would be a sort of implicit recognition of one's culpability), or possibly a very general confession of sins to the priest. This latter view seems to be the conclusion of Göller who studied the question very closely.[9]

In the De Paenitentia, we have seemingly conflicting texts about the confession made to the priest. In one context, Ambrose castigates those who refuse to ask forgiveness from God from whom nothing is hidden, but do not hesitate to confess their sins to a man from whom these sins were hidden.[10] The evident subject of the latter statement seems to be the priest. It is also the priest who fixes the penance to be done by the confessed sinner and this penance must in some way be proportionate to

---

7 See the various texts in Ep. XIX, 5 (P.L. 16, C. 1025); De Hel., 83 (CSEL 32.2, 462, 17-18); Exp. Ev. Luc., V. 10 (CC 14, 138, 92-96); Exp. ps. XXXVII, 43 (CSEL, 64, 172, 2-10).

8 De Paenit. II, 86-87.

9 E. Göller, "Analekten zur Bussgeschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts", Römische Quartalschrift, 36 (1928), pp. 278-89.

10 De Paenit. II, 91 (CSEL 73, 199): "An quisquam ferat, ut erubescas deum rogare, qui non erubescis rogare hominem, et pudeat te deo supplicare, quem non lates, cum te non pudeat peccata tua homini, quem lateas, confiteri?"

XUM

the sins committed. How could this be done unless the priest first knew what sins had actually been committed by the penitent?[11] We must remember that often the sins of the penitent were not notorious or public.

Ambrose has a profound compassion for sinners and he expresses this thought throughout his penitential writings.[12] Ambrose herein imitates the compassion of Christ who came among sinners to suffer with their weaknesses and failings; and when the priest does the same, in reality he is imitating Christ.[13] The priest must not be harsh or difficult since he must imitate the Good Shepherd of the Gospel who goes out to seek the one lost sheep and rejoices when he finds it.[14]

When the priest then has received the avowal of sin from the penitent, it is incumbant upon the former to impose the penance.[15] This implies -- for the penitent -- an exclusion from the Eucharist.[16]

---

[11] ibid., I, 90 (CSEL, 73, 160): "Si quis igitur occulta crimina habens propter Christum tamen studiose poenitentiam egerit, quomodo recipit, si ei Communio non refunditur?"

[12] ibid., II, 73 (CSEL 73, 193): "...ac primum, ut condolere norimus peccantibus adfectu intimo -- haec enim summa virtus, quia scriptum est: 'Et non gaudebis super filios Iuda in die perditionis eorum, et ne magniloquaris in die tribulationis eorum --, sed quotienscumque peccatum alicius lapsi exponitur, compatiar nec superbe increpem, sed lugeam et defleam, ut, dum alium fleo, me ipsum defleam dicens: 'Iustificata est magis Thamar quam ego'."

[13] Ep. LXIII, 47-48.

[14] De Paenit.,I, 2-3 (CSEL 73, 120). "Ideo dominus Jesus compassus nobis est, ut ad se vocaret, non ut deterreret. Mitis venit, venit humilis; denique ait: 'Venite ad me omnes, qui laboratis, et ego vos reficiam'. Reficit ergo dominus Jesus, non excludit neque abicit, meritoque tales discipulos elegit, qui dominicae voluntatis interpretes plebem dei colligerent, non repudiarent."

[15] We read dare paenitentiam and indicare paenitentiam in De Paenit., I, 4 and 10 (CSEL 73, 121, 123).

[16] De Paenit., I, 5 we read abdicare caelestibus mysteriis; Ep.XLI,4: sacramentis; De Paenit., I, 60: tollere a consortio communio. etc.

Nor could he take part in the offering of the faithful at Mass [17] but he could attend the Eucharistic celebration.[18] The various penances imposed were numerous such as fasting, weeping, lack of bath and soiled clothes, giving alms and even abstention from marital relations. Ambrose tells us that there were penitents who wept so much and so long that there appeared gullets on their faces from the tears and their bodies were racked beyond recognition from the many fasts.[19] It is for this reason that Ambrose calls penance a true "binding" (ligare), which is itself the gospel term.[20]

Yet all of this is the beginning of the divine mercy, even though it looks quite grim, and it is directed toward the reconciliation of the penitent. Indeed, the only reason for "binding" the sinner in this way was in reality to unbind him from his sins. It was already a grace for it will lead to the sinner's cure.[21] The sinner was excluded from communion for his own good so that his pride can be broken by the humiliation of penance.[22] This excommunication is only relative insofar as he is not thrown out of the Church. Rather its purpose was to readmit him fully after the time of penitential purification. It is the Church which loves him, prays for him, weeps for him in order to attract the

---

17 Ep. LI, 15.

18 H. Koch, "Die Büsserentlassung in der alten abendländischen Kirche", Theo. Quartalschr.,82 (1900), pp. 493-502.

19 De Paenit., II, 96 (CSEL, 73, 40-41).

20 Ibid., I, 7-10 (CSEL 73, 122-123).

21 Exp. Ev. Luc., IX, 29 (CC 14, 273-276).

22 Exp. ps. XCVIII, IX,4 (CSEL 62, 191, 12-17).

divine mercy to the penitent. It is the intercession for the sinner by the whole people of the Church which is sought by the penitent.

Yet it must be remembered that, in the final analysis, it is neither the intercession of the people nor the penance of the sinner which brings about the forgiveness of sin; this guarantee can only be found in the new sacerdotal intervention, correlative to the first by which the priest "unbinds" that which he previously bound,[23] thereby taking away the penance which he imposed[24] and rendering the sinner capable once again of receiving communion from which he had been excluded.[25]

This ceremony took place in a well-defined ritual on Maundy Thursday which culminated in the celebration of the Eucharist.[26] The priest prayed for the penitents and the absolution was given in a deprecative form. This is made clear in the De Spiritu Sancto of Ambrose where he emphasizes that it is the Spirit who forgives sin and that men only have a ministry by which they exercise a power which is not theirs properly speaking.[27] In the De Paenitentia, Ambrose argues against the Novatians in citing I Kings 2:25 and I John 5:16. The meaning of these texts is that the forgiveness of sins is not due to the intercession of the people or to the penance of the sinner but rather to the prayer

---

[23] De Paenit., I, 80-81; II 54-57; Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 11, 92; VII, 208, 255.

[24] De Paenit., I, 7-10: "soluere".

[25] Ibid., I, 4, 40: relaxare.

[26] Ibid., I, 5, 78, 80, 90: reddere communioni or caelestibus sacramentis.

[27] De Spiritu Sancto, III, 137 (CSEL 79, 208, 48): "Isti rogant, divinitas donat".

of one man who is not a common man (singularis vitae aliquis).[28] It is not very clear to whom Ambrose is making reference.[29] Yet, the examples cited from the Old Testament are those of Moses and Jeremiah, two prophets. In the mind of Ambrose, there is an intimate relationship between the prophetical Spirit and the sacerdotal dignity.[30] In his Explanatio super Psalmum XXXVII, Ambrose explains that David, after his sin, chooses to see the pestilence fall on the people rather than be forced to flee before his enemies. It would be unpriestly for the prophet to flee in the face of danger.[31]

The right of the priest to "bind" and "to loose" are not exactly equivalent. The second is much more profound, for thereby the sin itself is forgiven in which the sinner has lain as a slave.[32] The controversy with the Novatians -- which preoccupied the whole of the De Paenitentia of Ambrose -- was precisely about the ability of the priest to forgive sins before God and not simply to put an end to the penance imposed by the Church. Ambrose says clearly that auctor

---

[28] De Paenit., I, 42.

[29] Ibid., I, 45.

[30] De Sacr., V, 3 (CSEL 73, 60, 18-19, 24-28): "Vide mysterium: 'Moyses', hoc est propheta, 'virga', hoc est verbo dei: sacerdos verbo dei tangit petram, et fluit aqua et bibit populus dei. Tangit ergo sacerdos calicem, redundat aqua in calice, salit in vitam aeternam et bibit populus dei, qui dei gratiam consecutus est."

[31] Exp. ps. XXXVII, 16 (CSEL 64, 148, 6-11): "Suam fugam non poposcit propter illud, quia propheta pro populo deprecari poterat, sicut factum est, populus pro propheta intervenire non poterat. Scriptum factum est, populus pro propheta intervenire non poterat. Scriptum est, enim: si populus erraverit, sacerdos orabit pro eo. Si sacerdos erraverit, quis rogabit pro eo?"

[32] Exp. ps. CXVIII, VIII, 41-44; Exp. Ev. Luc., VIII, 175 ;De Paenitentia I, 73.

reconciliatur.[33] It is with the Father that the sinner is reconciled and not with the Church.[34]

The power to forgive sins belongs properly to God alone. But God has delegated to his priests this power which is his alone so that priests may exercise it on earth legitimately and efficaciously.[35] Christ has given this power to the apostles and the apostles in their turn to the priests.[36] Thus the Lord has shared his power of forgiveness with the apostles and with the priests of the Church and to all those who would inherit the function of the apostles through the ages.[37] Christ has given everything to his apostles and this includes the power to forgive sins.[38] The Spirit has been given to us, says Ambrose, to forgive us our own sins in baptism; he has also given the priests the power to forgive the sins of others.[39]

This power to forgive sins remains always the gift of God and a concession from God (donum, munus, dedit, donavit, permisit, licentiam).[40] Men do not exercise here a power which is properly theirs, for the function of the priest is a gift of the Holy Spirit.[41] Sins are not forgiven

---

33 Expos. Ev. Luc., VII, 208 (CC 14, 286).

34 Ibid., V, 13 (CC 14, 139, 128-130).

35 Ibid.

36 De Paenit., II, 12 (CSEL 73, 169, 77-70): "Similiter impossibile videbatur per paenitentiam peccata dimitti: concessit hoc Christus apostolis suis quod ab apostolis ad sacerdotum officia transmissum est."

37 Exp. ps. XXXVIII, 37 (CSEL 64, 212); De Paenit., I, 33 (CSEL 73, 135).

38 De Paenit., I, 34-35 (CSEL 73, 136).

39 Exp. ps. CXVIII, X, 17 (CSEL 62, 213).

40 De Paenit., I, 35 (CSEL 73, 136).

41 Ibid., I, 8 (CSEL 73, 123).

XUM

in the name of men but rather in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[42]

And because the priest has received this power as a gift from God, he must always exercise it according to the will of God.[43] This was a principal argument used by Ambrose against the Novatians. Ambrose notes that even in the Old Testament, God was full of mercy toward sinners. His anger was only for the purpose of drawing sinners to repentance.[44] Christ came into our midst to taste our human weakness and he is always ready to pardon us.[45] Especially, he came to call the weak and sinners who needed his help the most.[46] His disciples must also have the same compassion toward the sick and the wounded and all of the lost sheep.[47] The disciples in their own turn preached the forgiveness of sins to all men and they truly forgave the sins of men.[48] Moreover, God made no distinction among sins and forgave them all, no matter what they were; and he has given this same power to his priests with no exception insofar as sins are concerned.[49] This was contrary to the Novatian belief that certain sins could not be forgiven by the Church since their remission

---

42 De Spiritu Sancto, III, 137 (CSEL 79, 208).

43 De Paenit., I, 3, 6-7.

44 Ibid., I, 21-23; Exp. ps. XXXVII, 14.

45 Ibid., I, 92.

46 This theme was very popular in Ambrose. Cf. Cain, II, 11; Exp. ps. XXXV, 3; Exp. ps. XXXVII, 4; Exp. ps. XXXIX, 21; Exp. ps. LXI, 4; Exp. ps. CXVIII, III, 22-23; Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 19-27, 46; VI, 69-71; VII, 207, etc.

47 De Paenit., I, 2-3; Exp. ps. LXIII, 46-47; Exp. Ev. Luc., VII, 74-84.

48 De Paenit., II, 34-35 (CSEL 73, 178)

49 Ibid., I, 10 (CSEL 73, 124).

was left to the mercy of God. The Novatians bind without losing.[50] This clearly shows, according to Ambrose, that they are false priests with no power over sin at all. It was the Lord himself who gave both the power to bind and to loose to the apostles. He who therefore does not have the power to do one, does not, by that very fact, have the power to do the other. The Church possesses both, whereas the heretics possess neither. The Novatians do not have true priests nor do they have the Holy Spirit, for he who receives the Spirit also receives the power to forgive sins as well.[51]

The priests of the Church act in an entirely different way. God has introduced no distinctions among sins; so too the priests must not do so since the Lord gave them the power to forgive sins without restriction. They must be accommodating to all sinners no matter what their sins might be; to all they must give pardon in the name of the Lord.

What then is the role of the priest in penance? Christ gave to his apostles, along with the Holy Spirit, the complete power to bind and unbind; the apostles transmitted this power to the priests. The priests in their turn impose penance (bind) on those who come to them to confess their sins. They impose penance for a sufficient length of time and then forgive the sins, after which the penitents are admitted to the Eucharist from which they have been excluded during the actual time of doing penance. Since this power is received from God, it is exercised as a ministry in conformity to the will of the Lord. No sinner must be rejected, no matter what his sins may have been.

---

[50] Ibid., I, 4.7.

[51] Ibid., I, 7-8 (CSEL 73, 122).

3. NOVATIANISM AS THE CENTRAL PENITENTIAL PREOCCUPATION IN AMBROSE

The centers of Ambrose's preoccupation with penance were threefold: The schism of Novatianism; the pastoral needs of his people in order to encourage them seriously to accept penance; and finally, the case of the Emperor Theodosius, whom Ambrose demanded do penance for the massacre of Thessalonica. Each of these solicitudes must be examined in detail so as to arrive at an overall view of Ambrose's doctrine of penance.

NOVATIANISM ACCORDING TO AMBROSE

The schism of Novatian, a Roman priest and anti-pope, played an important part in the evolution of the Church's teaching on penance from the third to the sixth centuries. The story is well known and needs no detail here.[52] Novatian was the acknowledged leader of the Roman clergy after the martyrdom of Pope Fabian in the Decian persecution. He was defeated for election to the bishopric of Rome by Cornelius who became Pope in March, 251.

Novatian had already acted as spokesman for the Roman clergy in a letter to Cyprian advocating a moderate policy toward the lapsed in the Decian persecution.[53] After his defeat, Novatian joined forces with a rigorist minority against the admission of serious sinners to penance and thereupon had himself consecrated as a rival bishop of Rome. He demanded that apostates be forever excommunicated and made himself a champion of exclusive rigorism in matters of penance. The followers of

---

[52] For in-depth view, see J. Quasten, Patrology, II (Utrecht, 1953), pp. 212-233; E. Amann, "Novatien et novatianisme," DTC, XI, C. 815-849; A. D'Ales, Novatien. Etude sur la théologie romaine au milieu du III^e siècle (Paris, 1925); C.B. Daly, "Novatian and Tertullian", Irish Theological Quarterly, 19 (1952), pp. 33-43.

[53] Ep. 30 (CSEL, 3, 555F.).

XUM

Novatian, as Eusebius, the historian, tells us, "styled themselves Puritans (Katharoi)!"[54]

The Novatians in Northern Italy evidently followed their original practice of imposing penance by excommunication but they refused pardon, the fruit of penance. They would bind but would not loose. Equally inconsistent was their practice of denying that the ministry of forgiveness of these serious sins could be exercised by men.[55] The argument of Ambrose against them is simple: Penance is performed in vain if it lacks a pardon.

Ambrose sees a direct relationship between Novatian losing out as bishop of Rome (Episcopatus amissus) and the schism which began with him. In fact, Ambrose sees Novatian not simply in personal error, but, more seriously, as the founder of an ecclesial schism.[56]

What was the attitude of Novatian on penance according to Ambrose? Those Christians who had fallen into grave sin (praevaricatione lapsi or the peccatum contra Deum) were to be treated very harshly. For these, Novatian neither gave penance nor were they unbound (neque solvere) from penance.[57] In other words, these lapsi were excluded from pardon (venia).[58]

---

[54] Historia Ecclasiastica, 6, 43, 1

[55] P. F. Palmer, Sacraments and Forgiveness (Westminster, Md., 1959), p.89,91.

[56] De Paenit., I, 15, 85: (CSEL, 73, p.159): "Cuius vos similes esse, Novatiani, non potestis negare, qui ideo, ut dicitis, in ecclesiam non convenitis, quia per paenitentiam tributa spes fuerat his, qui lapsi sunt, revertendi. Sed hoc praetentum est specie. Ceterum episcopatus amissi dolore succensus Novatianus schisma conposuit."

[57] Ambrose poses this question and answer in his commentary on the Exp. ps. XXXVIII, 37 where he says, after quoting Mt. 16:19: "Hoc Novatianus non audivit, ecclesia dei audivit; ideo ille in lapsu, nos in remissione, ille in inpaenitentia, nos in gratia. Quod Petro dicitur, apostolis dicitur". CSEL, vol. 64, p. 213.

XUM

According to Ambrose, Novatian did not distinguish between sins and gave (for certain of these) neither penance nor reconciliation. Thus, according to Ambrose, Novatian placed an intolerable burden upon sinners,[59] since he gave no penance at all for the people guilty of grave sins against God. In any case, what was evident in this attitude of Novatian was a harshness which had pastoral consequences since these sinners would be abandoned by the Church and consequently condemned to eternal death.[60]

One thing, however, is noteworthy, namely, the fact that Ambrose observes that the Novatians held a different opinion than that of Novatian himself. These disciples (who called themselves the "cleansed", mundi[61]) are true heretics and schismatics.[62] They are schismatic because they divide the Church. The Novatians, according to Ambrose, also

---

[58] De Paenit., I, 3, 10: "Sed aiunt se exceptis gravioribus criminibus relaxare veniam levioribus. Non hoc quidem auctor vestri erroris Novatianus, qui nemini paenitentiam dandam putavit, ea scilicet contemplatione, ut quod ipse non posset solvere, non ligaret, ne ligando sperari a se faceret solutionem. In eo igitur Patrem vestrum propria damnatis sententia, qui distinctionem peccatorum facitis, quae solvenda a vobis putetis et quae sine remedio esse arbitremini...Ita nec Novatianus probatur, qui veniam interclusit omnibus..." CSEL, vol. 73, pp. 123-124.

[59] Cf. De Paenit., I, 3, 14: "Pro quibus ergo Christus interpellat, eos Novatianus accusat. Quos Christus ad salutem redemit, eos Novatianus damnat ad mortem. Quibus, Christus dicit: 'tollite jugum meum super vos et discite a me, quia mitis sum,' Novatianus dicit: inmitis enim meum est et onus meum leve est,' his grave onus et durum imponit jugum Novatianus." Ibid.,pp. 126-127.

[60] Ibid., I, 2, 5: "Sed negant his oportere reddi communionem, qui praevaricatione lapsi sunt. --Si unum tantum crimen exciperent sacrilegii, cui veniam negarent, dure quidem, sed tamen divinis tantum redargui viderentur sententiis, adsertionibus tamen suis conveniret." (p. 121)

[61] Ibid., 1, 1, 3: "Unde liquet eos inter Christi discipulos non esse habendos, qui dura pro mitibus, superba pro humilibus sequenda opinantur, et cum ipsi quaerant domini misericordiam, aliis eam denegant, ut sunt doctores Novatianorum, qui mundos se appellant" (p. 120).

believe that they have powers which, in reality, they have stolen.[63] The Novatians are therefore schismatics and usurpers. They are also heretics for they falsely interpret the will of the Lord. According to Ambrose, the true priests -- according to the will of Christ -- try to bring together the flock while Novatians hasten to exclude some from the Church. Consequently, Ambrose categorically denies to the Novatians the right to be the Church and to their priests the right to be true priests.[64]

The Novatian heresy is summed up in one phrase by Ambrose: In Ecclesia donari peccata negant posse. Novatians denied that the Church has such a power to forgive. The result is that Ambrose did not situate

---

62 Ibid., II, 4, 24: "Eos quoque adserit diabolico uti spiritu, qui separent ecclesiam domini, ut omnium temporum haereticos et schismaticos conpraehenderet, quibus indulgentiam negat, quod omne peccatum circa singulos est, hoc in universos". (pp. 173-174).

63 Ibid., I, 1, 3: See note number 14.

64 Ibid., I, 2, 7: (pp. 122-123). "Ecclesia in utroque servat oboedientiam, ut peccatum et alliget et relaxet. Haeresis in altero inmitis, in altero inoboediens vult ligare, quod non resolvat, non vult solvere, quod ligavit. In quo se sua damnat sententia; dominus enim par jus et solvendi esse voluit et ligandi, qui utrumque pari condicione permisit. Ergo qui solvendi ius non habet, nec ligandi habet. Sicut enim secundum dominicam sententiam, qui ligandi ius habet, et solvendi, habet, ita istorum adsertio se ipsa strangulat, ut, quia solvendi sibi ius negant, negare debeant et ligandi. Quomodo igitur potest alterum licere, non licere alterum? Quibis donatum utrumque est, aut utrumque licere manifestum est, aut utrumque non licere certum est. Ecclesiae autem utrumque licet, haeresi utrumque non licet; ius enim hoc solis permissum sacerdotibus est. Recte igitur ecclesia vindicat, quae veros sacerdotes habet, haeresis vindicare non potest, quae sacerdotes non habet. Non vindicando autem ipsa de se pronuntiat, quod, cum sacerdotes non habeat, ius sibi vindicare non debeat sacerdotale. Ita in inpudendi contumacia pudentem cernimus confessionem."

XUM

their denial on the liceity for the Church (or "moral power") but upon the very capacity of the Church to do so.[65]

Yet, Ambrose does see a distinction made by the Novatians between the peccata graviora,that is, the praevaricationes contra Deum[66] and less serious sins such as the sins against man. But the difference which Ambrose saw between Novatian and his disciples was the fact that the disciples imposed a penance for these graviora peccata but did not absolve the penitents:

Indicant paenitentiam, non relaxant[67]

Ligant quod non solvent[68]

This attitude was different from that of Novatian himself who did not impose what he could not absolve or take away. His disciples refused the hope of taking away what they had imposed.[69]

What was imposed as penance by the Novatians? It consisted principally in the perpetual exclusion from the Christian mysteries,

---

[65] Ibid., I, 9, 40-42 (pp. 138-140). Ambrose goes on here to explain the meaning of the scripture: "Si peccaverit homo in hominem, orabunt pro eo ad Deum; si autem in Dominum peccaverit homo, quis orabit eo?" Ambrose refers to his previous argumentation in I, 2, 7 (cf. note #64) and he concludes: "Primum, ut supra iam dixi, tunc te ista paterer obicere, si solis praevaricantibus non relaxares paenitentiam."

[66] Ibid., I, 1, 3-4.

[67] Ibid., I, 27; II, 4, 20.

[68] These expressions are synonymous.

[69] Ibid., II, 6, 45 (p. 183): "Advertimus quod hunc malorum suórum acerbissimum cumulum arbitrabatur, quia deerat, qui consolaretur maerentem. Quomodo ergo vos ipsam consolationem aufertis, qui spem relaxandae negatis paenitentiae?"

especially the Eucharist.[70] Therefore, the lapsed are abandoned by the Church and reserved to God alone. (The term reservati was already employed by Tertullian and by Cyprian.) Thus, according to the Novatians, forgiveness, or the venia, would be postponed in futurum, that is, to the end of life itself; at the same time, we have no evidence whatever that the Novatians reconciled the dying lapsi who were penitents in order to receive the viaticum. On the contrary, everything in their practice, according to Ambrose, indicates that these people were simply left to the mercy of God to be reconciled in heaven, and, even there, reconciliation is impossible. Ambrose suggests that in so reserving these penitents to God, the Novatians do not help them at all, that is, the lapsi would have to present themselves before God who, being immutable, could not forgive them, for it was Jesus who said that "he who denies me before men, I will deny him before God."[71]

In short, according to Ambrose, there is a double idea dominating the reservatio of the Novatians:

1. The first is the case of the lapsi who are reserved to God alone;

2. The second is that since God does not and cannot change, he will punish these lapsi. In other words, there is no forgiveness for the

---

[70] Ibid., I, 2, 5 (p. 121): "Sed negant his oportere reddi communionem, quo praevaricatione lapsi sunt."

[71] Ibid., I, 2, 6 (pp. 121-122): "Sed aiunt se domino deferre reverentiam, cui soli remittendorum criminum potestatem, cui soli remittendorum criminum potestatem reservent. --Immo nulli maiorem iniuriam faciunt quam qui eius volunt mandata rescindere, commissum mumus refundere."

Again in I, 3, 10: "In eo igitur patrem vestrum propria damnatis sententia, qui distinctionem peccatorum facitis, quae solvenda a vobis putetis et quae sine remedio esse arbitremini." (pp. 123-124)

Finally in I, 3, 11: "Quae autem ista perversitas est, ut vobis vindicetis possibilia concessu, deo -- ut ipsi dicitis -- impossibilia reservetis? Hoc est sibi eligere causas ignoscendi, deo materiem feriendi relinquere." (p. 124)

lapsi, either on earth or in heaven.

Ironically, this rigorist practice of the Novatians had laxist consequences. Instead of indicating a marked penitence as was the custom in the case of serious sin, the Novatians tended always to impose the same penitence. They even discarded the forms of habitual penitence which they considered to be too repugnant. They flee from public and habitual penitence which, adds Ambrose, might come from the fact that they consider themselves so clean that they do not wish to be sullied by the habitual practice of penance.[72]

The Novatians went on to teach that for the lesser sins (against man), penance was to be imposed, and after penance, forgiveness. Ambrose violently attacked them for making such a distinction among sins which could be forgiven by them and those which could not. He considers it intolerable that this group could assign a penance which itself is a sort of hope (spem veniae) and then distinguish a double and contradictory attitude: In the cases judged "less grave", reconciliation was given; other cases, judged to be impossible of forgiveness by the Church, were reserved to God.[73]

---

[72] Ibid., I, 8, 37 (p. 137): "Sed dicis, quia in lavacro operatur mysteriorum gratia. --Quod in paenitentia? Nonne dei nomen operatur? Quid ergo? Ubi vultis, vindicatis vobis dei gratiam, ubi vultis, repudiatis? Sed hoc insolentis adrogantiae, non sancti timoris est, ut fastidio vobis sint, qui volunt agere paenitentiam. Perpeti videlicet flentum lacrimas non potestis, non ferunt oculi vesti vilia vestimentorum, inluviem sordidatorum, superbo oculo et tumido corde, delicati mei, indignanti voce dicentes singuli: 'Noli me tangere, quia mundus sum'."

[73] Ibid., I, 10, 45 (p. 141): "Unde nec illa questio vestra quicquid poterit adferre ponderis, quam sumitis de epistula Johannis dicentis [I Jn. 5:16]. Non emim ad Moysen et Hieremiam loquebatur, sed ad populum, qui suorum peccatorum alium precatorem deberet adhibere, cui satis est, si pro levioribus delictis deum precetur, graviorum veniam istorum orationibus reservandam putet."

I, 9, 40 (p. 138): After citing the Scripture of I Kings 2:25,

The Novatians cited various scriptural arguments in favor of their position. Two texts in particular were considered by the Novatians to establish a distinction between those sins forgiveable by the prayer of the Church and those which were not:

I Kings 2:25: Si autem in Domino peccaverit homo, quis orabit pro eo?[74]

I John 5:16: Qui scit fratrem suum peccare peccatum non ad mortem, petet, et dabit illi vitam deus, qui non peccat ad mortem. Est peccatum ad mortem: Non de illo dico, ut oret.[75]

Moreover, the Novatian theory on the absolute irremissibility of certain sins was also based on two other texts:

Matthew 12:32: Et quicumque dixerit verbum contra filium hominis, remittetur ei; qui autem dixerit contra spiritum sanctum, non remittetur ei neque in hoc saeculo neque in futuro.[76]

Hebrews 6:4-6: Inpossible est enim hos, qui semel illuminati sunt, et gustaverunt donum caeleste et participes facti sunt spiritus sancti, et bonum gustaverunt dei verbum virtutesque futuri saeculi, lapsos iterum renovari in paenitentiam, rursum crucifigentes filium dei et ostentatione triumphantes.[77] (Perhaps they also used a third text as well,

---

(73 cont.) Ambrose concludes: "Tamen quid scrupuli ista adferret quaestio? Non enim, scriptum est: 'nullus orabit pro eo', sed 'quis orabit'; hoc est, quis ille sit, qui in tali causa orare possit, quaeritur, non excluditur."

I, 3, 10 (pp. 123-124): "Sed aiunt se exceptis gravioribus criminibus relaxare veniam levioribus...In eo igitur patrem vestrum propria damnatis sententia, qui distinctionem peccatorum facitis, quae solvenda a vobis putetis et quae sine remedio esse arbitremini."

[74] Ibid., I, 9, 40. (p. 138)

[75] Ibid., I, 10, 45 (p. 141)

[76] Ibid., II, 4, 20 (p. 172)

[77] Ibid., II, 2, 6 (p. 165)

namely, that of Matthew 10:32: Qui autem negaverit me coram hominibus, negabo et ego eum coram patre meo qui est in caelis.[78])

78 Ibid., I, 4, 15 (p. 127)

CONCLUSION

The Novatian heresy and schism was not, in the opinion of Ambrose, a form of "anti-clericalism" as was the case with the Montanism of Tertullian. The Novatian priests -- in the view of the Novatians -- had certain powers:

-- to impose penance and to reconcile those sinners in the case of the peccata leviora;

-- to impose penance but without the hope of pardon for the peccata graviora (which meant, in actual fact, the perpetual exclusion of this penitent from the Eucharist).

In the eyes of Ambrose, the polemic against the Novatians was a theological one at its center and base. Therefore, the controversy with the Novatians was not merely a question of discipline in the administration of penance. We have here, according to Ambrose, a profoundly theological problem and question: namely, that of the power of the Church and of the "divine dispositions."

This attitude of Ambrose should be compared to that of Basil on the same subject. For Basil, the Novatians (the Katharoi) constituted a true schism and the distinction is well established between the schismatics (those who reject ecclesiastical canons) and the heretics ("strangers to the faith"). For Basil, Novatianism created a schism. Among them, baptism is valid while baptism among the heretics is invalid. On the contrary, for Ambrose, the Novatians are both heretics and schismatics for they wrongly interpret the will of God.

XUM

4. THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PENANCE IN AMBROSE

The reflection of Ambrose on penance springs from and is developed in the light of his great fundamental positions on God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Church. Ecclesial penance depends in the final analysis on the will of God. As Ambrose puts it: [Sacerdotes] interpretes sunt voluntatis dominicae.[79]

The penitential problem for Ambrose is above all a theological problem in the strictest sense of the term, This responds well to the doctrinal character of the anti-Novatian polemic of Ambrose throughout his thinking on penance. There are two aspects of ecclesial penance which we should touch upon in discussing Ambrose's theological aspects of penance: The indulgentia or kindness of God and the reconciliation in ecclesial penance which is itself reconciliation with God.

(a) The Indulgentia of God

Ambrose vigorously insists on the mercy and kindness (indulgentia) of God. God and Christ are much more merciful than severe. Indeed, the severity of God is only another way to mercy and forgiveness. God's severity tends to lead man into the sphere of His mercy and is itself a way of mercy and love. One finds this fundamental idea throughout the De Paenitentia. It is for that reason that Ambrose writes that the moderatio (mercy) of God tempers his justice. He develops this same

---

[79] De Paenit., I, 1, 3 (p. 120): "Ideo Dominus Jesus conpassus nobis est, ut ad se vocaret, non ut deterreret. Mitis venit, venit humilis; denique ait: 'Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis, et ego vos reficiam'. Reficit ergo dominus Jesus, non excludit neque abicit, meritoque tales discipulos elegit, qui dominicae voluntatis interpretes plebem dei colligerent, non repudiarent."

theme and line of thought in the Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam.[80]

Ambrose treats this same theological problem in his De Cain et Abel which is a treatise on theodicy. God punishes and he is good. When God punishes, says Ambrose, he does it by some intermediary, e.g. Israel is punished by Egypt and Assyria. That is, God participates only indirectly in punishment since God is merciful. He pardons by his ministers, the Levites and priests.[81]

Philo of Alexandria[82] had already developed this theory of the "divine double virtue" in the texts of Genesis which Ambrose uses in this particular study of the second book.[83] Ambrose imitates Philo but his perspective is different. For Philo, the divine benevolence is applied to rewarding the virtuous while God's severity is put into play in order to correct those who err. The difference between Ambrose and Philo here is significant. For the bishop of Milan, the mercy of God takes in -- above all -- sinners themselves.

---

[80] VII, 207 (CC 14, p. 286): "...sed quia fragilitas humana firmum nequit in tanto saeculi lubrico tenere vestigium, etiam adversus errorem remedia tibi bonus medicus domonstavit, spem veniae iudex misericors non negavit. Itaque non otiose sanctus Lucas ex ordine tres parabolas posuit: ovis quae perierat et inventa est, dragma quae perierat et inventa est, filius qui erat mortuus et revixit, ut tripilici provocati vulnera nostra curemus."

[81] Cain, II, 4, 15 (CSEL, vol. 32, p. 391) where Ambrose says: "Accedit eo quod duo quaedam in deo principia sunt genera virtutum, unum quo remittit, aliud quo vindicat. Remittuntur peccata per dei verbum, cuius Levites interpres et quidam exsecutor est, remittuntur per officium sacerdotis sacrumque ministerium, puniuntur quoque per homines, sicut per homines, sicut per iudices, qui potestate ad tempus utuntur..."

[82] Cf. De Sacr., 37 (187, 17; I 251, 9C); 36 (186, 26; I, 250 2C); 32 (183, 35; I 244, 10C); 30 (182, 27; I 242, 8C); 27 (180, 46, 1 239, 3C); 28 (181, 35; 1240, 14C); 29 (181, 40; I 241, 4C); 33 (184, 19; I 245, 1C).

[83] Genesis 1:2 seqq.; 4:4; 7:10; 18:24 seqq.; 25:29; 29:34; 37:24; 41:26.

XUM

The same theme is repeated and treated again in more precise fashion in the De Paenitentia.[84] The Novatians, insisting on the fact that God is unchangeable and immutable, drew some rigorist and unacceptable conclusions from this fact. Ambrose remarks that penance itself manifests already the mercy of God. God's "vindication" is never exercised for itself. All penance is a remedium for the sinner. God awakens us and draws us out of our spiritual slumber in order to deliver us from sin.[85] This same theme is presented for us in the Explanatio super psalmum 37.[86]

Christ appears in the work of Ambrose above all as one who exercises the greatest mercy: Habemus moralem et indulgentem magistrum.[87] Moreover, Christ is indeed our merciful leader but He is always conscious of our human weakness.[88] Jesus understands the morals of men as well as the

---

[84] I, 5, 21-23 (pp. 129-130) cf. "Nonne apparet, quod ideo nobis peccantibus indignetur dominus Jesus, ut indignationis suae nos terrore convertat? Indignatio ergo eius non ultionis exsecutio, sed magis absolutionis operatio est" (I, 5, 22, p.129).

[85] Ibid., I, 5, 22 (p. 130): "Expectat ergo gemitus nostros, sed temporales, ut remittat perpetuos; expectat lacrimas nostras, ut profundat pietatem suam. Sic in evangelio viduae matris lacrimis compassus filium eius resuscitavit. Expectat nostram conversionem, ut revertatur et ipse ad gratiam, quae, si nullus nobis lapsus inreperet, in nobis perseveraret. Sed quia peccatis nostris contrahimus offensam, indignatur, ut humiliemur."

[86] Exp. ps. 37, 14 (CSEL, vol. 64, pp. 145-146). We need note only the phrase contained in this section: "Vide docentem deum, qua moderatione eius indignatio leniatur, si non penitus verbera recusemus, sed qualitatem levandi, non evitandi supplicii postulemus. Tria proposuit, ut quod moderatius putaret eligeret. Vide etiam quemadmodum ad paenitentiam provocat, ut nos offeramus iniuriae , eligere mandans, ut in ipsa poena electionis quadam praerogativa servetur et reo meo blanditur hoc verbo." See also De Paenitentia I, 5, 22: "indignatio ergo non ultionis exsecutio, sed magis absolutionis operatio est."

[87] De Paenit., I, 14, 70 (p. 152).

[88] Ibid., I, 17, 92 (p. 161): "Moralis magister et nostrae fragilitatis conscius et pietatis divinae interpres vult donari peccatum..."

meanderings and weaknesses of the human heart. He shows all men at all times his magnificent good will and mercy and in this, notes Ambrose, Christ is truly interpres pietatis divinae.[89]

In this last remark, we can plainly see the anti-Novatian tenor of Ambrose's development. This is true throughout the whole work of Ambrose. In his De Paenitentia, he relates these remarks in a more developed way against the Novatians. The mercy of Christ toward all sinners coincides with the mercy of the Father toward all sinners.[90]

Thus, as an extension of this divine mercy, this same obligation to mercy is above all incumbent on the priest who must also enter into this movement of mercy which flows from the Father. Ambrose goes into some detail in the description of the qualities of mercy in the priests as they exist in the Father.[91]

(b) The Reconciliation in Ecclesial Penance is the Reconciliation with God.

1. Pater reconciliatur

Ambrose envisions the reconciliation of the sinner by the Church as a reconciliation with God. The term itself (reconciliatio) is used in Ambrose only in this sense and is never used to designate reconciliation with the Church. It is only with God that one can reconcile

---

89 Ibid.

90 "Et hic quidem si ad patrem referas, quia hostia pro peccatis filius est. Delectatur pater reditu peccatoris: supra delectatur filius inventa ove, ut scias quia una est patris et filii delectatio, una operatio in ecclesiae fundamento." Exp. Ev. Luc.VII, 233 (CC, vol 147, pp. 294-295).

91 Ibid., VII, 225 (p. 292): "Haec est prima confessio apud auctorem naturae, praesulem misericordiae, arbitrum culpae."

oneself.[92]

It is the Father who hastens to reconcile the sinner. Commenting on the passage Advocatum habemus apud Patrem, Ambrose clearly shows that the final term of reconciliation is the Father Himself. Christ firmly promises the paternal mercy toward the sinner.[93]

2. Christus: Medicus et Sacerdos

Christ is the divine physician of souls. The sinner asks Christ to extract (serpare) the evil that is within him, the tumor (umorem) which is within him.[94] Thus Jesus is the good physician, both merciful and competent at the same time.[95] He gives forgiveness here on earth.[96] This latter theme will be taken up and applied in another

---

92 Ibid., VII, 224 (p. 292): "Sed jam redeamus ad patrem. Licet non verear, ne istius paenitentiam gerentis exemplo diu afuisse videamur -- numquam enim afuimus, qui versabamur in vinea, in qua se et iste mansisset, non recessisset a patre -- cavendum tamen est, ne nos ei reconciliationis faciamus moram, quam non fecit pater. Facile reconciliatur, quando inpense rogatur."

93 Ibid., VII, 225: "Confitere magis ut interveniat pro te Christus, quem advocatum habemus apud patrem, roget pro te ecclesia, inlacrimet populus. Nec vereare te non inpetres. Advocatus spondet veniam, patronus promittit gratiam, reconciliationem tibi paternae pietatis pollicetur adsertor."

94 Ibid., V, 27 (p. 145): "Solum te sequor, domine Jesu, qui sanas vulnera mea. 'Quis enim me separat a caritate dei, ' quae in te est? Tribulatio an angustia, an famis? Ligatus sum fide clavis quibusdam et bonis conpedibus caritatis innexus sum. Omne mandatum tuum sicut cauterium inpressum tenebo. Etsi erit canterium mandati, tamen vitium ulceris tollit. Auger igitur, domine Jesu, potenti machaera tua meorum putredines peccatorum. Dum habes ligatum caritatis vinculis, seca quodcumque vitiosum est. Veni cito incidens occultas et latentes varias passiones, aperito vulnus, ne nexius serpat umor...Inveni Medicum, qui in caelo habitat et in terris spargit medicamenta. Hic solus potest sanare vulnera mea..."

95 Ibid., VII, 207 (p. 286).

96 Ibid., V, 27 (p. 145): "inveni medicum, qui in caelo habitat et in terris spargit medicamenta." Cf. M. F. Barry, The Vocabulary of the Moral-Ascetical Works of St. Ambrose (Wash., D.C., 1926), pp. 28-30.

XUM

place to the priest, who, on earth, also does the work of mercy.

Christ is also priest. When Ambrose comments on Luke 5:14 (Et continuo lepra eius discessit ab eo. Et ipse praecepit illi ut nemini diceret; sed, Vade, ostende te sacerdoti), Ambrose does not give a "clerical" interpretation of this passage. For him, the priest to whom the sinner who has been cured must show himself, is none other than Christ Himself. Therefore, the term sacerdos in Ambrose means him to whom one presents oneself in order that he may give testimony to a state or condition. Christ is this testis puri affectus, that is, the witness of our good disposition. The offering which the penitent must present to Christ is a sacrificum spirituale, that is, his very person.[97]

What is important here is that, for Ambrose, it is Christ alone who has the power to forgive sins. When he enters into this line of reflection on the power of Christ, Ambrose brings some added nuances. In pardoning sin, Christ does not act only in virtue of an "imperial" power or in virtue of an imperium (of a principatus) of the Word in his eternal condition. In other words, Christ not only has the power to forgive sin because he is the Son of God, but also (and this is specific in Ambrose) because he alone has borne our sins and because he offered

---

97 Ibid., V. 8 (p. 137): "Ostendere autem se sacerdoti iubetur et offerre pro emundatione sua, ut, dum offert se sacerdoti, intellegeret sacerdos non legis ordine, sed gratia dei supra legem esse curatum et, dum mandatur, sacrificium secundum praeceptum Moysi, ostenderet dominus quia legem non solueret, sed impleret, qui secundum legem gradiens supra legem sanare eos quos remedia legis non sanaverant videretur. Et bene addidit: 'sicut praecepit Moyses'; lex enim spiritalis est, ideoque videtur sacrificium spiritale mandasse. Denique addidit: 'ut sit in testimonium hoc vobis,' hoc est: si deo credatis, si inpietatis lepra discedat, si occultorum cognitor sit sacerdos, si puri testis adfectus, unde potest ille magis sacerdos, si puri testis adfectus, unde potest ille magis sacerdos videri quem occulta non lateant..."

himself for our sins. This idea can be found in many places in the writings of Ambrose.[98] When Ambrose comments on the adulterous woman, he notes that it is Christ who remains alone with the woman ut peccata condonet. Christ is also the good shepherd who starts out alone to find the stray sheep, who takes him back on his shoulders and takes charge of all sinners even to the point of the cross.[99] This leads Ambrose to say that the imperium of justice of Christ is of a wholly other genus than that of any earthly kingdom.[100]

---

[98] Among others, see De Paenit., II, 2, 9 (p. 167): "Illud quoque evidens, quod in eo, qui baptizatur, crucifigitur filius dei, quia non potuit caro nostra abolere peccatum, nisi crucifixa esset in Christo Iesu...Quod ideo scriptum est, ut credamus, quia ipse crucifigitur in nobis, ut per illum peccata nostra mundentur, ut ipse Chirographum nostrum adfigat cruci, qui solus potest donare delicta." Exp. Ev. Luc. VI, 109 (p. 214): "Sed quoniam nullus hominum tantus esse potuit, qui totius mundi peccata tolleret, neque Enoch neque Abraham neque Isaac, qui licet morti se obtulerit, servatus tamen est, quia omnia non poterat abolere peccata -- quis enim tantus homo, in quo omnium peccata morerentur? -- Idcirco non unus e plebe, non unus e numero, sed filius dei a deo patre electus est, qui cum supra omnes esset, pro omnibus se posset offerre. Quem morte oportuit, ut cum esset fortior more, alios liberaret factus 'inter mortuos sine adiutorio liber, sine adimento scilicet hominis aut alicuius creaturae liber', sine adiumento scilicet hominis aut alicuius creaturae liber, a morte, et bene liber, qui servitutem cupiditatum reppulit, mortis vincula nesciunt." Also Ep. 26, 16.

[99] Exp. Ev. Luc. VII, 208 (p. 286): "Qui sunt isti, pater, pastor, mulier? Nonne deus pater, Christus et ecclesia? Christus te suo corpore vehit, qui tua in se peccata suscepit, querit ecclesia, recipit pater... Prima misericordia, secunda suffragatio, tertia reconciliatio."

[100] De Paenit., I, 2 (p. 120): "Etenim qui studet humanae infirmitatis emendare vitia, ipsam infirmitatem suis debet sustinere et quodammodo pensare umeris, non abicere. Nam pastor ille evangelicus lassam ovem vexisse legitur, non abiecisse, et Solomon ait: 'Noli iustus esse nimium.' Debet enim justitiam temperare moderatio ." Cf. also I, 6, 27; 5, 26.

5. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PENANCE

Because of the error of the Pneumatomachi, or those who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit, Ambrose is led to specify the role of the Holy Spirit in the remission of sins. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is a given of faith itself since it is the Spirit who forgives sins at baptism and in penance.[101] The ministry of men is dependent upon the work of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who alone can forgive the sins of men.[102] The Holy Spirit is divine since He, along with the Father and the Son, forgives sin in baptism and in penance.[103] In still other places, Ambrose develops this equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit by showing that the Spirit participates in the Lordship of the Father and the Son. This shows and proves for Ambrose the equality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son.[104]

---

101 De Spiritu Sancto, III, 18, 137-138 (CSEL, vol. 79, pp. 208-209).

102 Ibid., "Homines autem in remissionem peccatorum ministerium suum exhibent non jus alicujus potestatis exercent. Neque enim in suo, sed in Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti nomine peccata dimittunt. Isti rogant divinitas donat; humanum obsequium,sed munificentia supernae est potestatis". P.L., vol. 16, C. 694.

103 Ibid., "Utique qui non potest ab unitate naturalis nominis separari, non potest enim a Dei potestate secerni. Si autem a Dei non secernitur potestate, quomodo a Dei appelatione secernitur?"

104 Cf. Exp. Ev. Luc., VII, 44 and 248 (CC, vol. 14, pp. 299,298): "Qui autem aliam patris, aliam filii, aliam spiritus memorant potestatem plures deos et plures dominos in ecclesiam gentilis vitio erroris inducunt."

XUM

6. RECOURSE TO THE CHURCH

We have already seen that Ambrose did not consider Novatianism as anti-clerical. It is for that reason that he is not content to emphasize the role of the priest in penance but emphasizes from a larger perspective the intervention of the Church in penance.

The parable of the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke furnished him with the first general idea on the importance of the Church by comparing it with the action of the prodigal son going back to his merciful father.[105] The prodigal son arises and addresses himself to the Church, says Ambrose, for it is in the Church where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are found.

Ambrose stresses that there is no antithesis, no exclusivism between the prerogatives of God and that of the Church: Pater, Pastor, Mulier.[106] The Church is the place where the wounded man (the sinner) can find God's merciful forgiveness. Thus we find the following two themes in Ambrose:

(a) The Church as Stabulum

---

105 Exp. Ev. Luc., VII, 229 (p. 293): "Haec aput se, sed non satis est dicere nisi ad patrem venias. Vbi illum requiras, ubi invenias? Exsurge primo, hoc est qui sedens ante dormiebas. Et ideo dicit apostolus:... Iniquitas in talento plumbeo. Sed et Moysi dicitur: 'tu autem hic sta'. Stantes elegit Christus. Exsurge ergo, curre ad ecclesiam; hic est pater, hic est filius, hic est spiritus sanctus."

106 Ibid., 208 (p. 286): "Qui sunt isti, pater, pastor, mulier? Nonne Deus Pater, Christus, ecclesia? Christus te suo corpore vehit, qui tua in se peccata suscepit, quaerit ecclesia, recipit pater. Quasi pastor revehit, quasi mater inquirit, quasi pater vestit. Prima misericordia, secunda suffragatio, tertia reconciliatio. Singula singulis quadrant: redemptor subvenit, ecclesia suffragatur, auctor reconciliatur."

The inn where the good Samaritan brought the man who had fallen among thieves in order to take care of him, is the Church itself. Christ is the good Samaritan. The heretics cannot be cured because Christ does not let them enter the inn.

It is therefore to the Church that the wounded (the sinners) are confided in order to be cured. Sinners will find therein a cure and find an efficacious remedy for their illness.[107]

Ambrose says that Christ leaves the innkeeper two aera: One signifies the promise of the remission of sins in the Old Testament and the other signifies the realization of the remission of sins in the New Testament by the application of the death of Christ to the sinner.[108] Yet, the place where the sinner must have recourse in order to be cured and to which the good Samaritan, that is Christ, brings him is always the Church.[109] Penance for sins is absolutely necessary for grace and

---

[107] De Paenit., I, 1, 51-52, sq. (CSEL, 73,pp. 143-145): "Ideo dicitur: 'Ut omnis, qui credit in eum, non pereat', 'Omnis,' inquit, hoc est ex quocumque statu, ex quocumque lapsu, si credat, perire non timeat. Potest enim fieri, ut aliquem de Hierusalem decendentem in Hiericho, hoc est de martyrii certamine relapsum in istius vitae cupiditatem saecularemque gratiam, vulneratum a latronibus, hoc est persecutoribus, et semivivum relictum, evangelicus ille Samaritanus inveniat, qui nostrarum custos animarum est, -- Samaritanus enim custos dicitur -- et non praetereat eum, sed curet et sanet."

[108] "Haec sunt duo aera, quae misit ecclesia posteaquam accepit a Christo. Quid enim sunt duo aera, nisi pretium novi et veteris Testamenti? Pretium Scripturae fides nostra est; nam quod legitur, pro intelligentis aestimatur arbitrio. Remissio igitur peccatorum utriusque pretium Testamenti est, quae per agnum in typo annunciata est, in veritate completa per Christum." Ep. 26, P.L. 16, C895.

[109] Ibid., "Ista sunt duo aera quae Samaritanus ille Evangelicus ad ejus curandâ vulnera, qui incidit in latrones, stabulario dereliquit (Luc. X, 35). Ergo et ista specie vidua, in typo Ecclesia, hoc gazophylacio sacrum conferendum putavit, quo pauperum sanarentur vulnera, peregrinorum jejunia sedarentur." Also De Paenit., I, XI, 52 (CSEL, 73, p. 145)

forgiveness to become part of the sinner's grace. But without penance, there is no grace; but if there is penance then grace will follow.[110]

It is only within the inn (the Church) that the remedium delinquentis is dispensed to sinners. It is Christ who dispenses this medicine to the sinners who come there.[111]

But the essential question remains for Ambrose to answer: to what extent, to what measure does the role of doctor or healer pertain to a particular person? Who exercises the role of doctor (forgiveness of sin) or of innkeeper? This brings us to the second theme.

(b) The Church, that is, the people, gives its suffragium.

This phrase of Ambrose is often found in his penitential works: Ecclesia suffragatur. The same idea is often invoked in various forms. The Church appears under the traits of Martha who implores Christ to intervene on behalf of a dead man.[112] Sometimes the same idea is given

---

110 Ibid., "Ubi poena praescribitur, debet esse poenitentia peccatorum: ubi remissio donatur, gratia est. Praecedit poenitentia, sequitur gratia. Neque poenitentia ergo sine gratia, neque gratia sine poenitentia; debet enim poenitentia prius damnare peccatum, ut gratia possit abolere. Ideo typum legis accipiens Joannes baptizavit in poenitentiam, Christus ad gratiam."

111 "Inveni medicum, qui in caelo habitat et in terris spargit medicamenta. Hic solus potest sanare vulnera mea, qui sua nescit, hic auferre cordis dolorem, pallorem animae, qui novit occulata." Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 27 (CC, 14, p. 145).

112 De Paenit., II, 7, 54, 57 (CSEL, 73, pp. 185-187): "Veniet ad monumentum tuum Christus, et si viderit flere pro te Martham, boni feminam ministerii, flere Mariam, quae adtente audiebat verbum dei sicut sancta ecclesia; quae optimam partem sibi elegit, movebitur misericordia; cum viderit in tuo obitu lacrimas plurimorum, dicet: 'Ubi posuisti eum?' hoc est 'in quo reorum statu est, in quo paenitentium ordine? Videam, quem fletis, ut lacrimis suis ipse me moveat. Videam, si iam peccato ei, cuius venia poscitur, defunctus est'."

"Videns itaque grave onus peccatoris inlacrimat dominus Jesus; solam enim flere non patitur ecclesiam, conpatitur dilectae suae et dicit defuncto..."

to us in the person of the widow of Nain who weeps over the death of her son, which evokes, for Ambrose, the image of the Church crying over the death of a sinner. Before this distress of the sinner, the Church is moved with compassion (viscera Ecclesiae) and Ambrose immediately adds: et viscera nos sumus.[113] We may also remark at this point that the universal priesthood of the faithful is often evoked in this respect.[114]

(We note here that in Ambrose there is no trace of anti-pelagianism -- as was the case for his pupil, Augustine. He is content simply to outline and emphasize the two important elements of penance: The essential place of the sacrifice of Christ and the role of the Church, the importance of ecclesial intervention, of its sacrificium lacrimarum and of its patrocinium.)

This patronage (patrocinium) of the Church on behalf of the sinner, which consists in her supplications to Christ for him, presupposes that the penitent makes himself known to the community. This explains public penance. In this sense, the faithful are testes

---

113 Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 92 (pp. 164-165): "Etsi grave peccatum est, quod paenitentiae tuae lacrimis ipse lavare non possi, fleat pro te mater ecclesia, quae pro singulis tanquam pro unicis filiis vidua mater intervenit; conpatitur enim quodam spiritali dolore naturae, cum suos liberos letalibus vitiis ad mortem cernit urgueri. Viscera sumus de visceribus eius; sunt enim et spiritalia visera, quae habet Paulus dicens...Nos ergo viscera ecclesiae sumus, quoniam membra sumus corporis eius, de carne eius et de ossibus eius. Doleat igitur pia mater, adsistat et turba, non solum turba, sed etiam multa conpatiatur bonae parenti. Iam resurges in funere,iam liberaberis a sepulchro; stabunt illi ministri tui funeris, incipies vitalia loqui, timebunt omnes." Cf. Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 89; De Paenit., I, 15, 80-83; 16, 90; 17, 92-93; Also Exp. Ev. Luc. V, 10-11; VII, 208, 225; Exp. ps. 118, 7, 21; Exp. ps. 37, 10.

114 Cf. Exp. Ev. Luc.,VIII, 52 (p. 317): "Omnes autem sumus, si merita nostra patiantur, iustitiae sacerdotes, qui unctione laetitiae in regnum et sacerdotium consecramur."

precationis et conscii.[115]

7. THE JUS SACERDOTALE

When Ambrose speaks of the jus sacerdotale, he refers habitually to two scriptural texts: Matthew 16, 18-19 (Quodcumque ligaveris super terram erit legatum...) and to John 20:23 which he usually combines with the above-mentioned text of Matthew.

This ligatio and solutio which are done on earth by the Church condition in fact the ligatio and solutio which are done in heaven. Ambrose never envisions any form of hiatus between the two, between that of earth and that of heaven.[116] Above all, Ambrose insists strongly

---

115 De Paenit., II, 10, 91 (p.199): "An quiquam ferat, ut erubescas deum rogare, qui non erubescis rogare hominem, et pudeat te deo supplicare, quem non lates, cum te non pudeat peccata tua homini, quem lateas, confiteri? An testes precationis et conscios refugis, cum, si homini satisfaciendum sit, multos necesse est ambias, obsecres, ut dignentur intervenire, ad genua te ipse prosternas, osuleris vestigia, filios offeras culpae ad huc ignaros, paternae etiam veniae precatores? Hoc ergo in ecclesia facere fastidis, ut deo supplices, ut patrocinium tibi ad absecrandum sanctae plebis requiras, ubi nihil est, quod pudori esse debeat, nisi non fateri, cum omnes simus peccatores, ubi ille laudabilior, qui humilior, ille justior, qui sibi abiectior."

116 Cf. Exp. ps. 38, 37-38 (CSEL, 64, pp. 212-213): "Nisi hic remiseris mihi, ibi remissionis requiem invenire non potero; quod enim ligatum in terra manserit, ligatum manebit in caelo; quod solutum in terra fuerit, solutum erit in caelo. Propheta enim et praedicator ecclesiae Congregandae evangelico spiritu indulgentias domini praevidebat et praecipienda apostolis ei dominus revelabat..."

"Cui ergo non remittutur in exilio est, in peregrinationis iniuria perseverat, hic ergo petenda est venia -- hic enim dictum est: 'beati qui fletis, quia ridebitis -- hic locus est veniae postulandae. deploremus igitur in terris, ut mereamur indulgentiam, nisi remissum peccatum hic fuerit, non habebimus requiem, si requies non fuerit, non erit vita aeterna, si vita aeterna non fuerit, non erimus. ideo petit remitti sibi, antequam eat, ut sit; si enim remissum non fuerit, non ero, inquit, cum his qui sunt, cum his qui in paradisum merentur ascendere."

on the hic in terris with regard to the forgiveness of sins without which there can be no eternal life. It is now that one must be delivered from one's sins (Imploremus in terris ut indulgentiam mereamur). When he confronts the doctrine of the Novatians who reserved serious sins to the future, Ambrose reproaches them severely for obliging God, as it were, to condemn these people.[117]

(a) The Meaning of the Terms Ligare and Solvere in Ambrose.

In the anti-Novatian controversy, Ambrose affirms the double power which the Church has received from Christ: She can "loose" and "unloose", that is, she can impose penance and absolve from the penance imposed. Ambrose claims that the Novatians have retained only one of these powers, with the practical result that thereby both are really denied.[118] In effect, Ambrose thinks that the ligatio is entirely oriented to the solutio and one makes no sense without the other. The ligatio is only a remedy. For this reason, it is easy to understand the preference which he gives to medical images to emphasize and illustrate the power of the ligatio. If one ties up a wound, for example, it is only in view of its cure. On this point, the parable of the good Samaritan gives Ambrose the occasion to bring together and explain the terms ligare and alligare. There is a real identification established

---

[117] De Paenit., I, 16, 89 (p. 160): "Prius 'hic' promisit, ut fastida dilationis auferret, addidit 'et in futurum', ut hic disceres credere in futurum quoque solvenda tibi praemia. Remuneratio igitur praesentium testimonium futurorum est." Also, ibid., I, 17, 92 (p. 161): "Quid expectamus, ut mortui mereantur veniam, qui mortem sibi intulerunt, cum viverent?"

[118] Ibid., I, 2, 608 (pp. 121-123) "Ecclesia in utroque servat oboedientiam, ut peccatum et alliget et relaxet. Haeresis in altero inmitis, in altero inoboediens vult ligare, quod non resolvat, non vult solvere, quod ligavit."

between the ligare and the solvere. The reason is that the ligare is already an anticipation of the solvere or solutio. Both are within the same and unique process. Ambrose concluded by saying simply: Sic sancta plebs cum ligatur exuitur.[119]

The same idea is given to us in the parable of the Good Samaritan. On the wounds of the fallen victim, there are poured the wine (destined to clean the wound albeit painfully) and the oil (whose curative powers are more tender): Non vinum sine oleo.[120] Both remedies -- both harsh and tender -- are intended only to cure. It is the reconciliating intention which sustains the rather painful journey of the ligatio.[121]

At first sight, the ligatio and the solutio do not respond perfectly. The priest absolves from the penance which he has imposed;

---

[119] "Ut vinea dum iugatur erigitur, ut recisa non minuitur sed augetur, ita sancta plebs dum ligatur exuitur, dum humiliatur adtollitur, dum reciditur coronatur." Exp. Ev. Luc., IX, 29 (p. 341)

[120] "Nonne bovis videtur ille, qui lapsus est, semivivus esse, si vitale aliquid fides spiret? Nam qui penitur deum ex suo corde abicit, ille mortuus est. Qui ergo non penitus abicit, sed per inpressionem tormentorum ad tempus negavit, semivivus est. Aut si mortuus est, cur ei dicis agendam paenitentiam, qui jam curari non potest? Si semivivus est, infunde oleum, non vinum sine oleo, sed et quod foveat et remordeat." De Paenit., I, 11, 52 (p. 144) Cf. also Exp. Ev. Luc. VII, 75 (p. 239): "Multa medicamenta medicus habet iste, quibus sanare consuerit. Sermo eius medicamentum est. Alius eius sermo constringit vulnera, alius oleo favet, alius vinum infundit..."

[121] De Paenit., I, 5, 21-22 (p. 129-130): "In ipsa indignatione velut patrio quodam adfectu haeret, quomodo ad poenam tradat errantem..."
"Nonne apparet, quod ideo nobis peccantibus indignetur dominus Jesus, ut indignationis suae nos terrore convertat? Indignatio ergo euis non ultionis excecutio, sed magis absolutionis operatio est...Expectat ergo gemitus nostros, sed temporales, ut remittat perpetuos; expectat lacrimas nostras, ut profundat pietatem suam."

on the contrary, the Novatians do not wish to absolve what they have bound. The term ligare is therefore well understood of the very imposition of penance, and penance appears as a poena or punishment: an exclusion from communion, a separation from the holy altar, from the celestial sacraments as well as an exclusion from the domicile of the saints.[122] Therefore "to absolve" (solvere) is understood in the sense of taking away this exclusion and once again to admit to communion.[123] Yet let us also note that this poena or pain is already distinct from the pain which is penale.[124]

On the other hand, the imposed penance is more a medicine than a

---

[122] Ibid., I, 15, 78 (p. 156): "Bonus itaque doctor, dum promittit alterum de duobus, utrumque donavit. Venit in virga, quia a communione sacra convictum removit -- et bene dicitur tradi satanae, qui separatur a Christi corpore--..."

Ibid., I 13, 60 (p. 148): "Quid esset in virga venire, docet invectio fornicationis, accusatio incesti, repraehensio tumoris, quod inflati essent, quos magis lugere oporteret, postremo condemnatio rei, ut tolleretur a consortio communionis et traderetur adversario, non ad interitum animae, sed carnis".

Ibid., II, 3, 14 (p. 169): "Bene dicitur, quia peregre profectus est, ut qui erat a sacris altaribus separatus; hoc est enim ab Hierusalem illa, qui in caelo est, civico quodam et domestico sanctorum separari domicilio.

[123] Ibid., I, 16, 90 (p. 160): "Si quid igitur occulta crimina habens propter Christum tamen studiose paenitentiam egerit, quomodo istic recipit, si ei communio non refunditur? Volo veniam reus speret, petat eam lacrimis, petat gemitibus, petat populi totius fletibus, ut ignoscatur ei, obsecret. Et cum secundo et tertio fuerit dilata eius communio, credat remissius se supplicasse, fletus augeat, miserabilior..." Cf. also, I, 15, 80 (pp. 156-157).

[124] "Haec omnia in scripturis divinis qui quaerit, invenit, nam et primum illo ut in dolore positos consolemur, docet illa, quae in libro Hieremiae flebiliter clamat ad captivos et exules Judaeorum:...credentibus igitur in dominum est in domini misericordia consolatio. est enim aliud consolationis genus his qui graves solverit poenas, ut habes scriptum:... etiamsi fides deerat, poena satisfecerat; relevantur solutione poenarum qui non absoluuntur commendatione meritorum..." Exp. ps. 118, 18, 2 (CSEL, vol. 62, pp. 396-397).

poena, an act of mercy rather than one of severity.[125] This pain is not merely to exclude from the holy sacraments but rather to bring a remedy to the sinner.[126] The object of penance is never to reject, but to sustain the sinner, to reassemble, to restore, to call and to purify him;[127] to ligare the sinner, is to bind up (alligare) a wound, which is, in reality, an act of mercy.

The effort of penance itself cannot be compared properly to an exclusion or at least a definitive one. In this sense, therefore, the absolution is not exactly the contrary of the imposition of penance. The priest does not loose that which he has bound. By the penance which he has imposed, does he not by that very fact already loose the bonds of sin (Plebs cum ligatur, exuitur)?

---

[125] De Paenit., I, 16, 87 (p. 159): "Sed noverat Paulus dominum misericordem, noverat dominum Jesum severitate magis discipulorum offensam quam misericordia."

[126] Ibid., II, 9, 89-90 (p. 198): "Sunt etiam, qui arbitrentur hoc esse paenitentiam, si abstineant a sacramentis caelestibus. Hi saeviores in se iudices sunt, qui paenam praescribunt sibi, declinant remedium, quos vel poenam suam conveniebat dolere, qui caelesti fraudarentur gratia."

"Alii propostia spe agendae poenitentiae licentiam sibi delinquendi prorogatam putant, cum poenitentia remedium peccati sit, non peccandi incentivum. Vulneri enim medicamentum necessarium est, non vulnus medicamento, quia propter vulnus medicamentum quaeritur, non propter medicamentum vulnus desideratur."

[127] Ibid., I, 1, 2-3 (p. 120): "Etenim qui studet humanae infirmitatis emandare vitia, ipsam infirmatatem suis debet sustinere et quodammodo pensare umeris, non abicere. Nam ille evangelicus lassum ovem vixisse legitur, non abiecisse, et Salomon ait:...Debet enim ustitiam temperare moderatio; nam quaemadmodum se sibi curandum praebeat, quem fastidio habeas, qui contemptui se, non conpassioni medico suo putet futurum?"

"Ideo Dominus Jesus conpassus nobis est, ut ad se vocaret, ut non deterreret. Mitis venit, venit humilis; denique ait:...Reficit ergo dominus Jesus, non excludit neque abicit, meritoque tales discipulos elegit, qui dominicae voluntatis interpretes plebem dei colligerent, non repudiarent."

Cf. 1, 15 (p. 159): "Utique tunc penitus tollitur, cum aboletur peccatum eius; non enim excludendum ab ecclesia dicit apostolus, qui suadet esse purgandum."

Moreover, in speaking of the penitential effort in general (independent of the public penance), Ambrose means to speak of solvere nexus peccati of the Christian who looses the bonds of his sin. Here, the bonds are not those which the ligatio sacerdotale has imposed but those in which the sinner himself has become ensnared. Ambrose comes back constantly to this theme in his Expositio psalmi 118. It therefore seems that the ligare does not always designate the imposition of the poena which the solutio of the priest will loose; but the term sometimes indicates that the sinner paralyzes himself in the bonds of his fault or sin.[128]

---

128 See many references here: De Paenit., I, 14, 73 (pp. 153-154): "Vides ergo, quia animus noster culpae auctor est? Itaque innocens caro, sed plerumque peccati ministra. Ergo non te vincat formae concupiscentia ...Ipsi nobis ergo tendimus retia, quibus involvimur et inplicamur. Ipsi nobis vincula nectimus..."

Exp. Ev. Luc., IX, 5 (p. 334): "Adligatus autem perfidiae vinculis tenebatur, iniquio addictus domino errore famultatus, sed dominatum sibi vindicare non poterat quem dominum fecerat non natura, sed culpa."

Exp. ps. 118, 8, 41-44 (pp. 175-178): "Sunt ergo vincula quibus constringimur, etsi nobis videamur liberi, beatus qui haec solvit sibi vincula...non manu utique visibilia vincula dicit esse rumpenda, sed invisibiles criminum nexus morum conversione et fidei professione solvendos aut manu, hoc est opera manu tuae. eroga pauperibus, debiles elevato, redime captivos, et soluisti vincula tua." (41)

"Vinculis enim peccatorum suorum unusquisque constringitur, sicut ipse legisti; ligat nos vinculis carnis inlecebra. Vinculum nostrum avaritia est, vinculum nostrum ebrietas est, vinculum nostrum concupiscenia est, vinculum nostrum superbia est." (42)

"Noli ad saecularia mentem animumque defigere, sed circumspice oculis animae diligenter, quia pluit dominus laqueos super peccatores, ne cadentes inligare te possint; quos poteris evitare, si legem domini non obliviscaris. Etenim etiam qui ligatus est, si sibi sit conscius liberatis, oblivisci libertatem tuam non desinit et causam nonnumquam decit e vinculis eamque sibi legum praescripto defendit ac iudicio frequenter absolvitur." (44)

Apol., I, 16, 77 (CSEL, vol. 32, p. 350): "quibus vinculis se enodare desideran divinum sibi precatur auxilium, ut ab omni criminis perpetrati labe mundetur, et revera cum mitis et corde mansuetus egregia semper dederit sanctus propheta suae mansuetudinis et pietatis insignia..."

In these passages, the terms ligare and solvere do not correspond perfectly. Solvere does not signify uniquely to acquit from penance, but to deliver from sin. The vincula from which one is freed are not only the bonds which the priest imposes, but also the bonds that the sinner himself has imposed upon himself by sinning. The judicial vocabulary must now be complemented by a sort of medical vocabulary.[129]

At times, Ambrose furnishes certain indications which suggest the distinction of Augustine (cf. note 129) but which are not taken systematically to illustrate a parallel distinction. The scene of the resurrection of Lazarus is presented by Ambrose in the following way:

--The disciples and assistants ought to take away the rock enclosing the dead man by their prayers -- before the resurrection. This monumental stone represents the weight of sin which crushes the sinner.

--Christ raises Lazarus.

--Following this, the disciples take away the bonds: Then Lazarus can walk. He can once again take his place in the life of the Church. Thus, for Ambrose, the vincula solvere does not exactly signify to take away the bonds of sin, but rather to disengage the sinner from ecclesiastical punishments which impede him from having a normal life in the

---

129 Augustine has a similar doctrine. Apropos to the resurrection of Lazarus (In Evangelium Joannis, 49 and 121), Augustine establishes the following distinction:

-The resurrection is brought about by the voice of God.

-The disciples deliver the resurrected Lazarus from the bonds which held him, namely, culpability.

In this way, Augustine clearly distinguishes the work of Christ and that of the disciples in the resurrection of Lazarus and where the solutio was not simply to acquit from the poena.

Church.[130] Yet, it is the disciples who take away the weight of sin.[131]

(We may remark here that this same miracle about Lazarus is recounted for us in the Exameron;[132] but on this occasion, Ambrose makes no reference to penance. It is only in the De Paenitentia that the relationship between penance and Lazarus is made, but in a much less systematic manner than in Augustine.)

(b) The Ministerium in Ambrose

The two actions "to bind" and "unbind" are brought to bear directly on sin itself. This double action is described as a ministerium. There are three points to consider here:

(1) In the explication which he gives, Ambrose makes no distinction between the apostles and the sacerdotes, though Tertullian had reduced the importance of the words pronounced by Christ to only the apostles and even to Peter alone. Ambrose affirms that the words of Christ conferred the power to forgive sins on the sacerdotes as well as on the

---

130 De Paenit., II, 56-58 (pp. 186-187): "Veniet itaque et levari lapidem iubit, quem cervicibus peccatoris lapsus inposuit. Potuit removere lapidem imperio sermonis; iubenti enim Christo etiam insensibilis solet natura oboedire. Poterat tacita vi operationis occultae transferre saxum sepulchri, in cuius passione, motis subito lapidibus plurima defunctorum sepulchra patuerunt. Sed hominibus iussit, ut removerant lapidem in veritate quidem, ut increduli crederent, quod videbant, et aspicerent resurgentem mortuum, in typo autem, quod nobis donaret, ut levaremus delictorum onera, moles quasdam reorum. Nostrum est onera removere, illius est resuscitare, illius educere de sepulchris exutos vinculis."

131 Ibid., II, 58 (p. 187)

132 III, 2, 3, 10, (pp. 65-67 in CSEL, vol. 22)

apostles.[133]

(2) This power conferred on the priests is a divine power. What is impossible to men, Christ has given to the apostles and to the priests. Ambrose, as it were, comments almost ad hominem in Chapter VI of the Epistle to the Hebrews.[134]

What is clear here is that the sacerdotal action is distinct from the suffragium of the Church and is situated on another plane. Commenting on the parable of the paralytic, Ambrose notes that Christ prays not merely because he has been asked; it is Christ who has the power to heal.[135] The sacerdotal intervention therefore is not a simple delegation of the suffragium of the Church, but consists in the exercise of the auctoritas and imperium of God.[136]

(3) This power is described at the same time as a munus and as a mandatum, a gift and a duty, both of which are found frequently in Ambrose.

---

133 De Paenit., II, 2, 12 (pp. 168-169): "Possem quidem etiam illud dicere ei, qui hoc de paenitentia dictum putat, quia quae inpossibilia sunt homini, possibilia sunt apud deum, et potens est deus, quando vult, donare nobis peccata, etiam quae putamus non posse concedi, et ideo quod inpossibile inpetratu videtur, deo donare possible est. Nam et inpossibile videbatur, ut peccatum ablueret aqua...Similiter inpossibile videbatur per paenitentiam peccata dimitti: concessit hoc Christus apostolis suis, quod ab apostolis ad sacerdotum officia transmissum est."

134 Ambrose argues from Heb. 5:12-6; Heb. 6:1-2 (cited in De Paenit. II, 2, 11) to its explanation in ibid., II, 2, 12 (Cfr. note #133).

135 Exp. Ev. Luc., V, 10-11 (pp. 137-138): "Non otiosa huius paralytici nec angusta medicina est, quando dominus et orasse praemittitur, non utique propter suffragium, sed propter exemplum."

136 Ibid., V, 13 (p. 139): "Quamvis igitur magnum sit hominibus peccata dimittere--'quis enim potest peccata dimittere nisi solus deus,' qui per eos quoque dimittit quibus dimittendi tribuit potestatem?"

Munus: Ambrose insists very strongly on the idea of gift: It is the gift of the Holy Spirit.[137] The remission of sins can never be vindicated as a right.[138] Ambrose insists clearly that the forgiveness of sins is a question of a jus acceptum, a right received that one can never demand nor vindicate.[139] Ambrose could have spoken in this sense of a jus sacerdotale. The equation jus acceptum = jus sacerdotale has been well established in the eyes of Ambrose, for to trample, lessen or attack the sacerdotal power is to do the same to the power of the Spirit and, in the final analysis, to refuse to recognize the divinity of the Holy Spirit. To refuse the priestly power is to refuse the power of the Spirit.[140] In the final analysis to doubt the priestly power is to

---

137 De Paenit., I, 2, 6 and 8 (pp. 121-123): "Sed aiunt se domino deferre reverentiam, cui soli remittendorum criminum potestatem reservent ..."

"Specta etiam illud, quoniam, qui spiritum sanctum accipit, solvendi potestatem et ligandi accipit...Ergo qui solvere non potest peccatum, non habet spiritum sanctum. Munus enim spiritus sancti est officium sacerdotis, jus autem sancti spiritus in solvendis ligandisque criminibus est. Quomodo igitur munus eius vindicant, de cuius diffidunt iure et potestate?"

138 Ibid., II, 2, 12 (pp. 168-169): "Similiter inpossibile videbatur per paenitentiam peccata dimitti: concessit hoc Christus apostolis suis, quod ab apostolis ad sacerdotum officia transmissum est. Factum est igitur possible, quod inpossible aestimabatur."

139 Ibid., I, 7, 33 (p. 135) "Quod quidem recte de se fatentur; non habent enim Petri hereditatem, qui Petri sedem non habent, quam inpia divisione discerpunt. Sed hoc inprobe, quod etiam in ecclesia donari peccata negant posse...Cur igitur Paulum legunt, si eum tam inpie arbitantur errasse, ut ius sibi vindicaret domini sui? Sed vindicavit acceptum, non usurpavit indebitum."

140 Ibid., I, 2, 8, (p. 123) see note #137; also, De Spiritu Sancto, III, 18, (P.L. 16, C. 693): "Nunc videamus, utrum peccata donet Spiritus. Sed hic dubitari non potest, cum ipse Dominus dixerat... Ecce quia per Spiritum sanctum peccato donatur. Homines autem in remissione peccatorum ministerium suum exhibent, non jus alicuius potestatis exercent. Neque in sui, sed in Patris, et Filii et Spiritus sancti nomine peccata dimittunt. Isti rogant, divinitas donat." (Cf. CSEL, 79, 137, p. 208).

XUM

doubt the gift of Christ.[141]

Mandatum: Being a mandatum or a duty, this power of forgiveness of the priest ought to be exercised secundum magisterium Christi.[142] The ligatio and the solutio ought to be realized in obedience to the teaching of Christ; it is an officium, a duty or a function exercised as a service.[143]

By insisting on the ministerium (a term which sums up the double aspect of munus and mandatum), Ambrose indicates that it is a question of an imperium Dei exercised by the ministry of the priests. The term ministerium underlines the fact that the priest does not act in his own name; therefore, his ministry requires humility and obedience to the will of God.[144]

We can remark at this point that the theme of ministry receives in Ambrose another nuance than in the anti-donatist controversy. When, for

---

141 Ibid., II, 5, 34, (p. 178): "Si ergo his verbis usus est Petrus, quibus Deus usus sine praeiudicio scientiae suae, cur non accipimus et Petrum his usum sermonibus sine suae fidei praeiudicio? Neque enim poterat dubitare de Christi munere, qui sibi solvendorum peccatorum dederat potestatem, praesertim cum versutiis haereticorum locum non deberet relinquere, qui ideo volunt spem hominum destituere..."

142 Ibid., II, 5, 35 (p. 178)

143 Ibid., I, 2, 8 (p. 123): "Munus enim spiritus sancti est officium sacerdotis, ius autem sancti spiritus in solvendis ligandisque criminibus est."

144 Ibid., I, 2, 7 (p. 122): "Sicut enim secundum dominicam sententiam qui ligandi ius habet, et solvendi habet, ita istorum adsertio se ipsa strangulat, ut, quia solvendi sibi jus negant, negare debeant et ligandi. Quomodo igitur potest alterum licere, non licere alterum. Quibus donatum utrumque est, aut utrumque licere manifestum est, aut utrumque non licere certum est. Ecclesiae autem utrumque licet, haeresi utrumque non licet; ius enim hoc solis permissum sacerdotibus est. Recte igitur ecclesia vindicat, quae veros sacerdotes habet, haeresis vindicare non potest, quae sacerdotes dei non habet. Non vindicando autem ipsa de se pronunciat, quod, cum sacerdotes non habeat, ius sibi vindicare non debeat sacerdotale."

instance, Optatus of Milevium developed this same argument, it was with an entirely different preoccupation:[145] The sacramental action of the priest is independent of its moral value. Ambrose insists on the humility of him who exercises the divine power.[146]

This ministry which the priest exercises today, he must give account for later in the presence of Christ: It is Christ who will judge if the ministerium has been humbly exercised by the priest and in obedience to the divine directives.[147]

This duty, this officium, is a duty of mercy. In a certain fashion, it is not so different from the duty of mercy which is incumbent on every Christian. In Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam (VII, 80-83) the teaching on mercy which is contained in the parable of the prodigal son is not applied in a direct fashion to the priest but to each of the faithful. Yet, within the context of its larger application, Ambrose remarks that this officium is imposed more particularly on the priest.[148]

Considered as a ministerium the remission of sins at baptism and

---

145 De Schismate Donatistarum, V, 7 (P.L. 11, C. 1058-1060)

146 De Spirit. Sancto.,III, 18, 137; See Ibid., Prologus, 18 (P.L. 16, C. 603-604): "Non mundavit Damasus, non mundavit Petrus, non mundavit Ambrosius, non mundavit Gregorius; nostra enim servitia sed tua sunt sacramenta. Neque enim humanae opis est divina conferre; sed tuum, domine, munus et Patris est, qui locutus est..." (also in CSEL, 79, pp. 23-24).

147 Exp. ps. 38, 37 (p. 213): "Non potestatem usurpamus, sed servimus imperio, ne postea, cum venerit dominus et ligatos invenerit quod oportuit solvi, commoveatur adversus dispensatorem, qui legatos servaverit servos quos dominus iusserat solvi dicens..."

148 "Bonus ergo stabularius stabuli eius, in quo 'agnovit asina praesaepe domini' sui et in quo gregas clauduntur agnorum, ne Frementibus ad caulas rapacibus lupis facilis in ovilia sit incursus" Exp. Ev. Luc., VII, 82 (pp. 240-241).

XUM

the remission of sins in penance are put on the same plane.[149] The priests have the power to forgive sins in penance as they have in baptism.[150] In both cases, the priest acts in virtue of the gift which he has received. As in baptism, and as in the miracles, God exercises his power and his grace by this ministry of man, (per hominem).

This theme is treated in diverse places and is expressed in different ways.

> Isti rogant, divinitas donat; humanum enim obsequium, sed munificentia supernae est potestatis. 151
>
> Non potestatem usurpamus, sed servimus imperio.[152]
>
> Adversum illos Christi armatur iniuria, his Christi suffragatur.[153]
>
> Accedit eo quod duo quaedem in deo principia sunt genera virtutum, unum quo remittit, aliud quod vindicat. Remittuntur peccata per dei verbum, cuius Levites interpres et quidam exsecutor est, remittuntur per officium sacerdotis sacrumque ministerium...154
>
> ...sicut dixerat illis Jesus, ut agnoscas quod non suo sermone, sed dei verbo nec proprio, sed Christi nomine fidem populis infudere gentilibus...155

---

149 De Paenit., I, 8, 36 (pp. 136-137): "Cur ergo manus inponitis et benedictionis opus creditis, si quis forte revaluerit aegrotus? Cur praesumitis aliquos a culluvione diaboli per vos mundari posse? Cur baptizatis, si per hominem peccata dimitti non licet? In baptismo utique remissio peccatorum omnium est: Quid interest, utrum per paenitentiam an per lavacrum hoc jus sibi datum sacerdotes vindicent? Unum in utroque ministerium est."

150 The word in note #149 is "ministerium" and not "mysterium" as some ancient texts had./ Cf. note to this verse on p. 137 (CSEL, vol. 73)

151 De Spiritu Sancto III, 18, 137 (P.L. 11, C. 694 and CSEL, 79, p. 208-209).

152 Exp. ps. 38, 37 (p. 213).

153 De Paenit., I, 17, 94.

154 Cain, II, 4, 15 (CSEL, 32, p. 391).

155 Exp. Ev. Luc., IX, 8 (pp. 334-335).

Cur igitur Paulum legunt, si eum tam inpie arbitrantur errasse, ut ius sibi vindicaret domini sui? Sed vincidavit acceptum, non usurpavit indebitum.[156]

All of these ideas of Ambrose can be summed up by those given in the De Sacramentis where he says:

Auctor sacramenti quis est nisi Christus Dominus Jesus.[157]

The priest pronounces the words of Jesus but he does not speak in his own name. Thus the word of Jesus is an imperium efficax.[158]

(4) This ministry is given only to the priests.[159] This flows from the fact that only Christ can forgive sin.

The bond between these two statements or affirmations is expressed clearly in the Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam where Ambrose explains that it is God who forgives and those to whom God has given this power.[160] This gift which is proper to Christ is transmitted to the priests and to them alone. The formula of Ambrose, Solus Deus condonat, flows naturally

---

156 De Paenit., I, 7, 33 (p. 135): Paul pardons here but only by right of the acceptum, that is, it is not Paul but Paul in the person of Christ who pardons.

157 IV, 13 (CSEL, 73, p. 51). Also see the development of this phrase in the following paragraphs, 14-19.

158 Ibid., IV, 14 (p. 52): "Consecratio igitur quibus verbis est et cuius sermonibus? Domini Jesu. Nam reliqua omnia, quae dicuntur in superioribus, a sacerdote dicuntur; laus deo, defertur oratio, petitur pro populo, pro ceteris. Ubi venitur, ut conficiatur venerabile sacramentum, jam non suis sermonibus utitur sacerdos, sed utitur sermonibus Christi. Ergo sermo Christi hoc conficit sacramentum."

159 De Paenit., I, 2, 7 (p. 122): "Ecclesiae autem utrumque licit, haeresi utrumque non licit; jus enim hoc solis permissum sacerdotibus est."

160 V, 13 (p. 139): "Quamvis igitur magnum sit hominibus peccata dimittere --quis enim potest peccata dimittere nisi solus deus, qui per eos quoque dimittit quibus dimittendi tribuit potestatem?" See also De Paenit., I, 3, 10 (p. 124): "Sed deus distinctionem non facit, qui misericordiam suam promisit omnibus et relaxandi licentiam sacerdotibus suis sine ulla exceptione concessit".

into the formula Deus condonat per solos sacerdotes. It is from this affirmation that Ambrose denies this power to the heretical priests. How does Ambrose express this idea?

We have already seen that Novatianism was not presented nor understood by Ambrose as an anticlericalism. The Novatians claimed emphatically that they had priests. Thus the points of assertion made by Ambrose are not brought to bear on the sacerdos of the Novatians but upon the fact that it is necessary to be a priest of God[161] in order to be invested with this power to forgive sin.[162] The Novatian priests -- because they are heretics -- do not correctly interpret the will of the Lord.[163] These priests are not moved by the Holy Spirit because they have let themselves be moved by the impulses of the "impure spirit".[164] Therefore they cannot possess the Holy Spirit which is a gift of Christ.[165]

(We may note here that this idea according to which the remission of sins is not valid among the heretics and schismatics [an idea already expressed by Cyprian] does not force Ambrose to oppose the renewal of

---

161 We see this in the phraseology of Ambrose. Cf. "sacerdotibus suis" in De Paenit., I, 3, 10.

162 De Paenit., I, 2, 7 (p. 122) "haeresis...sacerdotes dei non habet."

163 In Exp. Ev. Luc., VII, 33 (p. 226) this same thought is expressed as not obeying the directives of the Lord: "Hague ut advertas deum non cultus aspernatem esse, sed fraudis, qui repudiaverat fraudulentem elegit innocentem dicens..."

164 Ibid., VII, 95 (p. 246): "Unde omnes quoque haereticos et schismaticos a regno dei et ab ecclesia intellege separatos. Et ideo non dei, sed inmundi spiritus omnis schismatum haereticorumque liquido claret esse conventus."

165 De Paenit., I, 7, 33 (p. 135): "Quod quidem recte de se fatentur; non habent enim Petri hereditatem, qui Petri sedem non habent, quam inpia divisione discerpunt."
Ibid., II, 4, 24-27 (pp. 173-174): "Eos quoque adserit diabolico uti spiritu, qui separarent ecclesiam domini, ut omnium temporum,

baptism of those who pass from heresy to the true faith. On this last point, the Bishop of Milan is in the Roman tradition.)

Thus, the argumentation of Ambrose supposes that only the priests have the power to forgive sins; but the point of his argumentation is brought to bear on the fact that only the priests of God have this power in the orthodox Church.

One text in Ambrose, however, raises a problem: Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam VII, 94 speaks of the Spirit, of the royal power, of the power to command which "we" receive. Does this text limit this power to priests alone? Do only priests receive this munus spiritus, the imperial power to cast out devils of which it is a question in the text? The text is unclear.[166] In any case, the texts where it is a question of the remission of sins show us clearly that Ambrose envisioned a gift of the Spirit that is proper to the priests.[167]

(165 cont.) "haereticos et schismaticos conpraehenderet, quibus indulgentiam negat...Soli enim, qui volunt solvere Christi gratiam, qui ecclesiae membra discerpunt, propter quam passus est dominus Jesus spiritusque sanctus datus est nobis." (24)

166 (p. 245). Here is the text: "...simul ostendi imperialem quandam esse sancti spiritus potestatem, in quo regnum est dei, nos quoque, in quibus habitat spiritus, regale donum."

167 Cf. De Paenit., I, 2, 8 (p. 123): "Specta etiam illud, quoniam, qui spiritum sanctum accipit, solvendi peccati potestatem et ligandi accipit ...Munus enim spiritus sancti est officium sacerdotis, ius autem sancti spiritus in solvendis ligandisque criminibus est."
Exp. ps. 118, 10, 17 (p. 213): "accepimus spiritum sanctum, qui non solum nostra peccata dimittit, sed etiam nos facit sacerdotes suos aliis peccata dimittere."

8. The Correptio in Ambrose

The sacerdotal intervention contains a "correction", that is, a power to correct (corripere). It is a medicine which is exercised by the priest.[168]

Thus Ambrose in his Apologia David puts, in an antithetical parallel, the attitude of King David (cum a privato homine correptus esset) with that of Christians who have difficulty in confessing their sins when they are corrected by the priests (cum a sacerdotibus corripiuntur).[169]

In his Epistola 51 sent to the Emperor Theodosius after the massacre of Thessalonica, Ambrose recalls the duty which the bishop has to correct the Emporer. It is a delicate duty, above all because of the great dignity of the Emperor; but it is an imperious duty nonetheless.[170]

In the Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam, the episode of the paralytic furnishes Ambrose with the occasion to give a long development on penance. Above all, he says, each sick person must have recourse to intercessors, to the counselors of the soul (monitores mentis) who, by

---

[168] In ps. 37, 56 (p. 181): "Medicina Christi correptio est; corripit enim dominus quem vult convertere."

[169] I, 2, 5-6 (pp. 301-302).

[170] 3, 6 (P.L. 16, C. 997-998): "Quid igitur facerem? Non audirem? Sed aures non possem cera veterum fumularum claudere. Proderem? Sed quod in tuis jussis timerem, in meis verbis deberam cavere; ne quid cruentum committeretur. Tacerem? Sed quod misserrimum foret omnium, alligaretur conscientia, vox eripteretur. Et ubi aliud? Sed si sacerdos non dixerit erranti, is qui erraverit, in sua culpa morietur, et sacerdos reus erit poenae, quia non admonuit errantem."

the assistance of the celestial word, bring them back and elevate them even higher. These intercessors prepare the penitent by correction in putting them in the presence of Christ. These counselors of the soul, using the remedy of the celestial word, are the priests.[171]

In order to situate the doctrine of Ambrose on the "preparatory" role of the priest, it is interesting to compare the commentaries on the resurrection of Lazarus presented by Ambrose with the Augustinian commentaries on the same evangelical episode.

Ambrose comments on this episode in three different places:

1. In the Exameron,[172] Ambrose as yet makes no allusion to penance. Yet he does note a sort of division of the scene into three different stages -- removere lapidem; ressucitare; vincula solvere.

2. In his Explanatio super psalmum I,[173] Ambrose clearly applies the scene of Lazarus to penance. If, here on earth, we are resurrected from among the dead, we will be resurrected to eternal life. It is therefore necessary to receive, even here on earth, the dew of the divine Word and the awaiting of the Spirit. Jesus must call us back to life by his powerful word even here below and we must be unloosed from our bonds by the disciples. In this text, two stages appear:

---

171 V, 10 (p. 138): "Primum omnium quod ante diximus unusquisque aeger petendae precatores salutis debet adhibere, per quod nostrae vitae conpago resoluta actuumque nostrorum clauda vestigia verbi caelestis remedio reformentur. Sint igitur aliqui monitores mentis, qui animum hominis quamvis exterioris corporis debilitate torpentem ad superiora erigant.

172 I, 7, 27 (pp. 25-26).

173 55 (pp. 46-47).

--the resurrectio: Christ resurrects the sinner.

--the disciples untie the bonds (we ought to note that the evangelist does not attribute this to the disciples).

Ambrose therefore makes a certain distinction of tasks (suggested by the earlier literature on the subject of penance, above all by the school of Origen,[174] for Origen himself excluded the fact that the solutio is the work of the disciples).[175]

3. Finally, the text of the De Paenitentia[176] in which Ambrose underlines the fact that Jesus is moved by the pleading of Martha (who is a figure of the Church). One notes in the text that Ambrose is hardly preoccupied with underlining the priority of the divine intervention or of placing the accent on the primacy of God as was the case with Augustine's theology: Ambrose says of Christ: lacrimis suis (Marthae) ipse me moveat.

One finds underlying this text in the De Paenitentia the three stages which were included in the scene of the resurrection of Lazarus in the Exameron. Here Ambrose emphasizes the first two stages:

--Take away the stone. Jesus could have--with no aid from anyone--taken away the stone himself by the power of his word; in fact, however, he commands men to accomplish this action. It is we who must take away the stone; it is only then that Jesus intervenes and resurrects.
--It is Christ who resuscitates the dead (Illius est ressuscitare). This is done only at the term of a whole preparation and only then does Christ intervene. The confession of sins is the moment of this resuscitation; it is only then that Jesus says veni foras. The disciples then take away the bonds and the veil in order to give the sinner the liberty of action to him who is henceforth without sin.

---

174 Cf. Fragment 79 contained in the fragments of In Johannem, GCS, 10;545-555.

175 Ibid., XXVIII, 7 (GCS, 10, pp. 397-398).

176 II, 7, 53-72 (pp. 185-193).

XUM

Thus the work of the priest appears both as a preparatory work and as an intervention which achieves the whole process of the intervention.[177]

Therefore, we do not find in Ambrose the theological developments traced in the work of Augustine. Augustine develops his thought in the following way:

1. In Sermo XCVIII,[178] Augustine speaks of a stone, but he does not note who takes away the stone. The stone is interpreted as being bad habits; moreover, Augustine says that it is Christ who delivers us from perverse habits.

As to the term solvere, Augustine refers directly to Matthew 18:18.

2. In the Sermo Maii,[179] the solvere signifies to take away the reatus; it rather indicates an action of accomplishment which does not, however, take away the poena but does take away the results of sin in us (reatus culpae).

3. In the Tractatus in Joannem,[180] Augustine does not mention who takes away the stone. Moreover, he identifies solvere with the solvere of Matthew, 16:19.

4. Ennerationes in psalmum 101:[181] Here it is Christ who takes the stone. It is Christ who does the work of preparation. Augustine also underlines the fact that only Christ can intervene interiorly; the

---

177 This second element is put more in relief in the Exp. ps. 1, 55 than in the De Paenit., II, 7, 53-72.

178 5.

179 125.

180 49, 24

181 Sermo, II, 3.

Church can only act on the exterior; the Church can only speak to the ears while Christ, on the contrary, can work in the hearts of men.

Thus in Augustine, the process is reduced to two stages:

--the confession in which God intervenes interiorly.

--the Church completes this by the absolution; it is a rather exterior intervention, an extrinsic one without being, however, simply juridical in nature.

As to the preparation, it is brought about by God himself in the hearts of men; and it is difficult to discern the relationship between the action of God and the exterior word pronounced by the Church (a sort of Augustinian occasionalism).[182]

9. The Moderatio in Ambrose

God is a moderated master,[183] that is, he is full of mercy and forgiveness. Thus, the priest ought to imitate this moderation. Ambrose treats this theme with great insistence. Thus in Expositio psalmi 118,

---

[182] Throughout this section we would seem to have given the impression that the sacerdotal intervention does not consist in a prayer, by distinguishing it from the suffragium of the Church. In fact, however, in commenting on the Quis orabit pro eo? Ambrose sees in this Quis someone exceptional, such as Moses or Jeremiah or Paul and not just one from among the people. This clearly supposes that the priest, like Moses, acts as an intercessor by prayer itself. Cf. De Paenit., I, 9, 42 (p.139): "Non enim quicumque de vulgo pro Iudaeroum populo, sed Moyses rogavit, quando vituli caput fidei inmemores adoraverunt"; Ibid., I, 10, 45 (p.141): "tales igitur deprecatores in delictis maximus sunt requiriendi; nam si quicumque de populo orent, non exaudiuntur."

[183] Exp. ps. 37, 14 (p. 146): "Non ergo penitus sibi peccatum remitti postulat, sed moderata solutione deleri, hoc est ut in futurum eius memoria deleatur...Vide docentem deum, qua moderatione eius indignatio leniatur, si non penitus verbera recusemus, sed qualitatem levandi, non evitandi supplicii postulemus."

Ambrose recommends a moderated attitude between justice and mercy.[184] In his De Helia et jejunio,[185] he shows that this attitude of moderation also implies integrity: It is necessary not only to opt for the exact measure but we must never make a distinction of persons (e.g. Emperors, high officials, etc.).[186]

In the application of penance, Ambrose uses the figure of the doctor and indicates that the medicine is made not only in view of the penitent, but one ought to see therein equally implied the bonum corporis Ecclesiae, the common good of the Church. It is necessary to weed out evil which is either in the member or is the member himself. Here there is a certain ambiguity:

1. Certain texts in Ambrose present all penance as being an exclusion from the body of the Church. In the De Paenitentia the taking away of a member (ablatio) is not a rejection but a purification which preserves the masses; it is even a work of mercy which purifies the

---

184 I, 17, (p. 17): "In illo cubiculo iustitias domini Jesus nupta repperit. Quae sunt illae justitiae...quod illi spreverunt, nos elegimus et sequimur consilium dei, quia nihil potest esse sublimius; hoc enim divinum, quo fit remissio peccatorum. Cum didicerit itaque iustitias domini, deum timens non confundetur".

185 VII, 21 (p. 305): "Quam bene post divitem, qui cruciatur in poenis, subiecit praeceptum veniae largiendae, his utique qui se ab errore convertunt, ne quem desperatio non revocat a culpa! Quam vero moderatus est, ut neque difficilis venia nec remissa sit indulgentia, ne quem vel austera percellat invectio vel coniventia invitet ad culpam!"

186 Ibid, XXII, 82 (CSEL 32,462-463): "Apostolus docet ut separemus nos ab omni fratre inquiete agente. Percutiamus eum gladio spiritali, qui est verbum dei. Non fratris, non propinqui accipiamus personam, sed omnem inmundum a Christi secernamus altaribus, ut emundet et corrigat lapsus suos, quo ad sacramenta Christi redire mereatur."
Cfr. De Officiis Ministrorum, II, 27, 135 (P.L. 16, C. 102).

member.[187]

2. Still other texts present the taking away of the sinner as an excommunication, a decision to be taken only as an ultimate recourse.[188]

What does Ambrose think of absolution given in case of feigned penance? This case of conscience was already posed to Origen. Ambrose comes back to this problem on several occasions:

1. In the De Paenitentia Ambrose says that in feigning penance, the bound sinner renders culpable the priest who must guard the Eucharist. This answer of course does not formally solve this problem of the value of the absolution but it does presuppose that the sinner remains unworthy.[189]

2. In the Expositio psalmi 118, the author remarks that the easiness or "facility" of the priest risks becoming an excuse for sin for

---

[187] I, 15, 79 (p. 156): "Nam et sequestrari oportet graviter lapsum, ne modicum fermentum totam massam conrumpat, et expurgandum est vetus homo, hoc est exterior homo cum actibus suis, vel in populo inveteratus peccatis vitiisque concretus. Et bene dixit expurgandum, non proiciendum; quod enim expurgatur, non totum indicatur inutile -- ideo enim purgatur, ut utile ab inutili separetur --, quod autem proicitur, nihil in se utile habere creditur." See also Exp. ps. 118, 8, 26 where all public penance is here presented as an exclusion "in bonum corporis". See also Exp. ps. 37, 14.

[188] De Officiis Ministorum, II, 27, 135: "Cum dolore amputatur etiam quae putruit pars corporis, et diu tractatur, si potest sanari medicamentis: si non potest, tunc a medico bono absciditur".
This is similar to Clement of Alexandria, Stromata II, XXVII, 171, 4.

[189] II, 9, 87 (pp. 197-198): "Nonnulli ideo poscunt paenitentiam, ut statim sibi reddi communionem velint. Hi non tam se solvere cupiunt quam sacerdotem ligare. Suam enim conscientiam non exuunt, sacerdotis induunt, cui praeceptum est..."

the faithful who witness such conduct.[190] The priest cannot be content with a little furtive tear (brevi lacrimula). Yet, no indication is here given as to the value itself of the absolution.

3. In the Epistola 67 to Simplicianus Ambrose underlines the fact that what is necessary is a simple and pure confession. He compares the intervention of the priests in penance to that of the priests of the Old Testament who ate a part of the holocaust and thus accepted the offering as valid; thus, the judgment of the priests must be prudent. The example chosen here is not purely metaphorical; it reminds us that the priest will communicate at the moment of communion, with the oblation of the sacrifice, that is, with the bread brought to the offertory.

The offering must be of a good quality. As to the penitent, "nothing within him can simulate holiness"; and the priest cannot eat a bad bread. The offering must correspond to an authentic spiritual oblation.

This leads us to suppose that the eucharistic oblation presented in place of penance to the priest serves for nothing if it does not correspond to a true spiritual sacrifice; if the penitent does not present this spiritual oblation at the same time as the eucharistic oblation,

---

[190] 8, 26, (p. 165): "In ipsa ecclesia, ubi maxime misereri decet, tenéri quam maxime debet forma justitiae, ne quis a consortio communionis abstentus brevi lacrimula atque ad tempus parata vel etiam uberioribus fletibus communionem, quam plurimis debet postulare temporibus, facilitate sacerdotis extorqueat. Nonne cum uni indulget indigno, plurimos facit ad prolapsionis contagium provocari? Facilitas enim veniae incentium tribuit delinquendi."
Cfr. De Paenit., I, 15, 79; Exp. ps. 37, 55-57.

XUM

this simulacrum of holiness, hidden under the word of a deceitful confession, is of no use to the penitent. The priests do not take away the sin of him who offers deceitfully.[191]

4. In his Epistle 51 to Theodosius, Ambrose affirms that he does not wish to offer the holy sacrifice in the presence of Theodosius and he subordinates the right to participate in the eucharistic oblation to the quality of the spiritual sacrifice.[192]

Still later on, - - when speaking of the problem of feigned penance -- another text of the Old Testament is cited from Leviticus 13 about leprosy. This text will serve as a starting point for the reflection on the sacerdotal judgment in penance. The word of the priest cannot render healthy the man who is sick.

Ambrose does not appeal to this text. In his Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam, Ambrose identifies the priest-judge of the leprosy with Christ who is alone the witness of the hidden, interior attitude. Does

---

191 6-11 (P.L. 16, C. 1058-1059): "Quomodo autem poterat, ubi ignis erat, peccatum exuri; et hoc sub conspectu Domini, cui et occulta sunt cognita? Numquid potest placere Domino, si quis ad huc versetur in iniquitatibus, et injustitiam corde inclusam teneat, dicat se agere poenitentiam? Simile est ac si quis aeger se sanum simulet, magis aegrotabit: quia nihil ei prodesse potest simulatio sanitatis (7).

"Hanc ergo culpam sacerdotes non augerunt neque peccatum eius, qui in dolo se offert, et ad huc in studio delinquendi est. Non enim possunt epulari in eo, quod plenum fraudis, et serpentis interius cicatricis est; cibus enim sacerdotis est in peccatorum remissione...in illo ergo subdolo cibus nullus est. Denique nec ipse epulandi suavitatem obducit"(11).

192 15 (P.L. 16, C. 1000) "Tunc offeres, cum sacrificandi accepteris facultatem, quando hostia tua accepta sit deo."

this not exclude the fact that the simple priest can judge a man's interior attitude?[193]

10. THE ROLE OF THE EUCHARIST IN PENANCE

First of all, let us recall that for Ambrose penance includes the exclusion from the sacraments. The remission of sins therefore renders the penitent capable once again of participating in the Eucharistic communion.[194]

The remission of sins is brought about by the [illegible] sacramentum passionis dominicae. This brings together, very closely, penance with the Eucharistic celebration. The remission of sins is not realized without the Eucharist. Thus in Expositio psalmi 118, Ambrose says that the human creature cannot be restored without the sacrament of the passion; is this not the Eucharistic celebration?[195]

In the same work, there is another mention of penance but only that done daily: In Lent, after fasting, there is a meal wherein one

---

193 V, 8-9 (p. 137): "Ostendere autem se sacerdoti iubetur et offerre pro emundatione sua, ut, dum offert se sacerdoti, intellegeret sacerdos non legis ordine, sed gratia dei supra legem esse curatum et, dum mandatur sacrificium secundum praeceptum Moysi, ostenderet dominus quia legem non solueret, sed inpleret, qui secundum legem gradiens supra legem sanare eos quos remedia legis non sanaverunt videretur."

194 De Paenit., I, 15, 78 (p. 156): "...vel quia sic tradidit, ut spiritum eius salvum faceret, vel quia eum, quem ante sequestraverat, postea sacramentis reddidit."

Ibid., I, 15, 80 (p. 156): "Iam tunc igitur apostolus reddendum sacramentis indicavit caelestibus, si purgari seipse vellet"

Ibid., I, 16, 90 (p. 160): "Si quis igitur occulta crimina habens propter Christum tamen studiose paenitentiam egerit, quomodo istic recipit, si ei communio non refunditur?"

195 22, 2-3 (pp. 489-490): "denique inventam pastor ovem umeris inponit suis. Agnoscis utique mysterium, quomodo ovis lassa reficiatur,

eats the body of the Lord Jesus in which there is a remission of sins.[196]

In Epistola 67, the bread which one eats is the remission of sins.[197] In the De Paenitentia, the remission of sins is realized by the blood of the Lord.[198] Again in the same work, the resurrection of Lazarus is followed by a meal. The penitential process is completed and fulfilled by the Eucharist.[199] In the commentary on the parable of the Prodigal Son in the Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam, Ambrose remarks that the episode is terminated by a meal which the merciful father offers to all those present; the author also remarks that we are introduced into the participation of the mysteries per gratiam sacramenti. What does this mean? Nothing permits us to conclude that it

---

(195 cont.) quia non potest aliter humana condicio lassa recreari nisi sacramento dominicae passionis et sanguinis Jesu Christi, cuius principium super humeros eius; in illa enim cruce infirmitates nostras portavit, ut ibi omnium peccata vacuaret. Merito guadent angeli..."

196 9, 39 (p. 147): "hic ergo panis factus est esca sanctorum, possumus et ipsum dominum accipere, qui suam carnem nobis dedit...ille enim accipit qui se ipsum probat; qui autem accipit non morietur peccatoris mortis, quia panis hic remissio peccatorum est"

197 11, (c. 1059): "Hanc ergo culpam sacerdotes non auferunt, neque peccatum eius, qui in dolo se offert, et ad huc in studio delinquendi est. Non enim possunt epulari in eo, quod plenum fraudis, et serpentis interius cicatricis est; cibus enim sacerdotis est in peccatorum remissione."

198 II, 3, 18-19 (p. 171): After describing the welcome, Ambrose says "...celebranturus enim pascha domini, epulaturus agnum, tectum debet adversus omnes incursus bestiarum spiritualium morsusque serpentis habere vestigium...Etenim quotienscumque sanguinem domini sumimus, mortem domini adnuntiamus. Sicut ergo semel pro omnibus immolatus est, ita, quotienscumque peccata donatur, corporis eius sacramentum sumimus, ut per sanguinem eius fiat peccatorum remissio."

199 Ibid., II, 7, 60 (p. 188): "Revisit sollicite resuscitatum, et celebratae resurrectionis gratis laetus ad caenam venit, quam ei sua preparavit ecclesia, in qua illa, qui fuerat mortuus, unus inter discumbentes cum Christo invenitur"

is a question of absolution; the terms rather refer to the occisio vituli; and this leads us to believe that it refers to the passion of Christ represented and rendered real by the Eucharistic celebration which leads to the communion of celestial realities (the Body of Christ).[200]

In the Exameron the sermon on Maundy Thursday shows abundantly that the Eucharist is the normal conclusion of penance. The "assembled eagles" come together to partake of the Body of Christ. This text speaks of "the celebration of the remission of sins" (quo celebratur indulgentia peccatorum).[201] One phrase in the text poses a problem (one wonders whether the term employed is a technical one used to designate the liturgy of reconciliation). Ambrose expresses himself in these terms: Adproperet Jesu domini passio, quae cottidie delicta nostra condonat et munus remissionis operatur.[202]

Thus one can here distinguish two effects of the passion of Christ:

---

200 VII, 232, (p. 294): "Occiditur et vitulus saginatus, ut carnem domini spiritali opimam virtue per gratiam sacramenti mysteriorum consortio restitutus epuletur. Nemo enim nisi qui timuerit deum -- quod est initium sapientiae -- nisi signaculum spiritale vel custodierit vel reciperit, nisi dominum praedicaverit, sacramentis debet interesse caelestibus."

201 V, 24, 90-92 (p. 203): "Sed jam tempus est quo finire sermonem et claudere debeamus, tempus est quo melius tacetur aut fletur, tempus est quo celebratur indulgentia peccatorum. Nobis quoque gallus iste mysticus in sacris cantet, quoniam Petri gallus in nostro sermone cantavit... cuius intenta sermoni Maria adparatus recusabat epularum: Quanto magis nos considerare debemus quia non multi sunt qui in verbo dei vivunt et ideo refectio corporis desideratur. Certe illius tridui nostrum hoc postridie laboriosius est. Et ideo qui cum auribus lusimus, cum gallo cantavimus, jam domini canamus mysteria, et ad corpus Jesu conveniant aquilae peccatorum ablutione renovata."

202 Ibid.

1. The daily pardon which is given by the reception of the Eucharist regularly, and notably during the time of Lent.[203]

2. The munus remissionis which seems to be more solemn and which is applied to more grave sins and given on Maundy Thursday.

This distinction appears to be valid. We do not, however, feel obliged, as does H. Franck,[204] to translate the munus remissionis by "the office of the remission of sins (or) the liturgy of penance". The munus is the gift which the divine mercy works by the passion of Christ (in the occurrence of the Eucharist).

Thus it follows from all this, that the penitential power of the priest is founded on the gift of the Spirit (munus Spiritus) and on the commandment of God in such a way that this ministry depends upon the will of God and the exact interpretation of his will.

The priest appears as a minister of the divine reconciliation (Pater reconciliatur), as a dispenser of the celestial medicine of Christ, above all by the word; he prepares the penitent to humiliate himself; he judges the medicine to be applied with moderation; he can accept the offering of the penitent only if it corresponds to an authentic interior sacrifice, under pain of self condemnation for profaning the Eucharist of which he is the guardian, or in neglecting the care of the "ecclesial body"; but such a reception would be vain for the penitent.

---

203 Cfr. Exp. ps. 118, 8, 48 (p. 180): "Tunc utique paratus adsiste, ut tibi accipias munimentum, ut corpus edas domini Jesu, in quo remissio est peccatorum, postulatio divinae reconciliationis et protectionis aeternae."

204 "Ambrosius und Busseraussöhnung in Mailand", in Heilige Uberlieferung. Festcrift, I (Herwegen, 1938) p. 149, note 51.

All this pastoral activity however does not exhaust the intervention of the Church. The recursus ad Ecclesiam presupposes the suffragium of the community. One can even say that Ambrose describes little about a prayer which would be specifically sacerdotal. Prayer is rather the fact of the community. Moreover, Ambrose employs very clear terms to indicate the imperium of the priest.

Ambrose rarely indicates that oral confession -- whose theology was well developed at the time -- must be addressed to the priest. Only once does he say that the confession is done to a priest; Ambrose's attention is brought to bear often on the entire community which must be a witness to the supplicating process of the penitent.

XUM

II. Penance in Ambrose: Some Conclusions

Ambrose clearly teaches that all men are sinners and it is God alone who is without sin. All men must do penance for their sins for all commit at least some light or venial sins and some commit very serious ones. Ambrose speaks of mortal sins but we really do not know exactly what he meant by that. Ambrose never gives us a list of serious or venial sins and presumably, he considered mortal sins those which his age saw as especially serious: murder, fornication and apostasy. Whatever be the classification of sins in Ambrose, the essential thing which comes through very clearly is that there are no unforgivable sins. The only difference among sins is that for serious sins recourse must be had to the Church and to the leaders (priests) of the Church who alone have the power to forgive sins. Each day we must pray for forgiveness of our multiple sins, but in the case of serious sin this is not enough. For this, the sinner must have recourse to the Church where alone the forgiveness for these sins can be found. Ambrose compares the Church to the lodge where the good Samaritan brought the gravely wounded man. This practice is properly called penance in the Church because it is public, the affair of the whole Church.

Penance for these sins is public because such sinners were forbidden to approach the Eucharist and they were also obligated to do the works of penance is an official and public way. What is of importance throughout the work of Ambrose is that we find no evidence whatever of any form of private penance along side that of public penance. Authors who have claimed this are simply trying to justify the present form of penance. Moreover, sins -- even those committed in secret -- had to be

revealed to the priest and for them all, public and private, public penance had to be done.

The first act of this public penance was an avowal of the sin by the sinner himself. There is no pardon possible without this accusation of himself on the part of the sinner. We are not certain what kind of an accusation this had to be to the priest: a simple confession to God, a detailed confession to the priest, the very implicit admission of sin in submission to public penance, etc. Yet, it is also clear that in certain texts, Ambrose is speaking of a detailed category of sins given to the priest. Ambrose even blames those who refuse to pray to God from whom nothing is hidden but who have made known their sin to a man. Such a man had to be the priest. It is also the priest who must "bind" the penitent according to the gravity of the sin but who would not be able to do so unless he knew exactly what those sins are -- especially in those cases where the sins were not public or notorious. Ambrose himself always held sins revealed to him by penitents in the strictest secrecy.

Thus the second aspect of the penitential discipline under Ambrose was the exclusion from communion by the penitent or by the priest. But there is more involved and demanded than the passive act of Eucharistic abstention. The penitent must do the <u>works</u> of penance in order to obtain the pardon of his sins. He must offer sacrifice of penance since he cannot offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist. The penitent must weep and fast and give alms, abstain from marital relations, etc. The penitent must become, in other words, another man from what he was before. Above all, he must pray, for it is only in prayer that the penitent will receive the grace of forgiveness. He must ask this forgiveness publicly with shame, in the Church. The penitent must weep abundantly for his himself

sins as did David in the Old Testament, the people of Ninevah, the woman of ill repute at the feet of Jesus and Peter after he denied Christ. The Emperor himself did this and it is for that reason that those lesser than he ought not to be ashamed to do so.

Yet, neither the compensatory acts of the penitent not the intercession of the whole people is sufficient for the unbinding of the penitent from sin. This is the exclusive work and duty of the priests of the Church to whom Christ has given this power to forgive sin on earth in his Name. A new sacerdotal intervention is necessary to unbind what he has bound. It is only then that there is said to the penitent what was said to the sick man of old, "thy sins are forgiven thee." It is only the priest who has the power by the will of the Lord to forgive sin as his intermediary. Such an intervention was usually given during a liturgical service on Maundy Thursday and the penitential service was culminated by reception of the Eucharist. Ambrose leaves us hardly anything concerning these rites but says simply that the priest prays for the penitents. In reality, men -- priests -- have only the ministry of forgiveness, for sins are only forgiven by God in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The prayer of the people is not sufficient, says Ambrose, to forgive these sins of the penitent. It must be done by a man who is uncommon, i.e., a priest.

The conclusion is that the most important act of the penitential rite is the unbinding of the penitent by the priest since this alone reaches him at the very core of his being. All of this implies a true pardon of sin as well as a true forgiveness of sin. The whole argument against the Novatians is centered here, that is, the power of the priest actually to forgive sins before God. The sinner, by the intermediary of

XUM

the priest, is reconciled with the Father. Since this is the crux of the whole controversy, it is not surprising that Ambrose insists on this gift of God to the leaders of the Church. It is for that reason that the priests have a ministerium since it is only through them that God himself forgives the sinner. It is they who ask but it is God alone who grants pardon. It is for that reason that the priest must always exercise this power in a Christlike manner, that is, the way Jesus himself exercised it while he was on earth, with utter humility and concern for sinners, avoiding rigorism as well as laxism. There were already those who wanted to approach communion immediately after their avowal of sin. Ambrose warns that to do so is to violate the conscience of the priest, and for that reason, penance must be done over a more or less long period of time before the readmission to the Eucharist. The wound must be given time to heal. Moreover, there was a pastoral reason for all this: to permit persons to be readmitted too easily to the Eucharist is to tempt others to sin. The priest, who through negligence or lack of care, readmits a penitent too easily or too soon to the Eucharist, carries a heavy responsibility.

Ambrose thus gives us a rather detailed analysis of the practice of penance in the Western Church at the end of the fourth century. Enrollment in the order of penitents followed upon confession to a bishop or, in the more populous Churches, to a priest whose duty it was to hear confessions and oversee the practice of penance. This must surely have been the case at Milan during the pontificate of Ambrose but the texts of Ambrose do not show this. It is the bishop who reconciles penitents on Maundy Thursday or in the case of Milan, on Good Friday. In the texts of

Ambrose, we are given no details of the ceremony of reconciliation and we are therefore also uncertain whether at Milan there actually was a separate ceremony of reconciliation or whether the reconciliation was in fact, simply the reception of the Eucharist. There is evidence from Cyprian, the Syriac Didascalia, Optatus, Jerome and Innocent I that the final reconciliation by the imposition of hands was an important feature of the earlier rite in the Church of Africa, Syria and Rome. It would be prudent -- but not certain -- to conclude the same for the Church of Milan.

Finally, this public penance could be given but once. The pastoral result, as can be imagined, was to postpone penance until near the end of life. Ambrose complains about this, as if it gave people a license to sin. He also warns that since we do not know the day or hour of death, this practice is very dangerous indeed.

The rule of a single penance applied only to public penance, to what Ambrose calls the penance of "public observance". Why was this so? It is difficult to say. The most probable reason is that the ritual of public penance was based to a great extent on the ritual of the catechumenate. The penitent, like the catechumen, was separated from the congregation, prayers were said over him and together they were excluded from the Eucharistic liturgy which followed. Since the rite of the Catechumenate could not be repeated, so too with the rite of public penance.

It is exactly here that we see the weakness of this whole penitential discipline in Ambrose and throughout this period. It is no wonder that penitential practice in the following centuries became more

XUM

and more the exception rather than the rule, falling almost out of practice by the Christian community. Both the rigor of its demands and the uniqueness of its reception spelled the ultimate downfall of public penance of the early Church. It had to be replaced by something more merciful as well as more practical. Moreover, there is another fatal flaw in this whole system of Ambrose. He insisted against the Novatians that the Church had complete power from God to forgive any and all sins. There are no irremissibile sins. But for all practical purposes, sins committed after public penance were in fact (if not theory) held to be irremissibile. It is for this reason that while the penitential discipline of Ambrose remains interesting from certain aspects, essentially it was and remains a pastoral failure. Penitential evolution was therefore unavoidable and necessary.

XUM

CHAPTER III

PENANCE IN LEO THE GREAT

1. Introduction

The theology of Leo I on the subject of penance is concentrated in two types of writings: In his Sermones and in his Epistolae.

(a) The sermons of Leo can be broken down into three categories with regard to penance:

--Sermons 1-5 which have to do with Leo's ordination;

--Sermons 41, 45, 46, 49, 50 which are Lenten sermons;

--Sermon 76 which treats at least incidentally of the remission of sins which is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

(b) The letters of Leo regulate particular cases responding to consultations by a sort of decretum. Thus we have Epistola 10 (the case of Hilarius); Epistola 108 (to Theodorus of Frejus); Epistola 167 (to Rusticus of Narbonne); Epistola 159 (to Nicetas of Aquila); Epistola 168 (to the bishops of Campania on the secrecy of confession).

For Leo there were some very specific centers of interest in questions of penance:

1. The discourses about his ordination or on the anniversary of his ordination, while underlining the defects and demerits of man, exalt the sacerdotal power of the priest (Sermons 1-5).

2. Leo's parenesis or exhortation to penance are found abundantly in his discourses of Lent (Sermons 41, 45, 46, 49, 50).

3. As regards the solution of disciplinary problems resolved by Leo, these are the general questions which Leo treated:

--The immediate reconciliation of sinners (penitents who are in extremis);

XUM

--Suffragia or prayers for penitents dead before reconciliation;

--The penance of the clergy;

--The publicity or public knowledge of confession.

For this in depth investigation of the notion of penance and the sacerdotal power in Leo, we have three important works on penance: Those of B. Poschmann,[1] P. Galtier,[2] and E. Goeller.[3]

Poschmann in his work deals with the power of the Keys in Roman penance. He says that it is not a question of a power over sins themselves but the reconciliation of penitents presupposes that they are already purified. Poschmann notes that the intervention of the Church is presented above all in Leo as a sacerdotal supplication or prayer which slowly takes precedence over the supplication or prayer of the people.[4] The reconciliation is a sacramental act which is necessary and founded on the power given to the priests by Christ.[5] Concerning the penance of the clergy, it is not easy to see the theological foundation of the position of Leo in this matter.

For Galtier, the thought of Leo on penance and particularly on the absolution was as follows:[6] The sacerdotal supplication consists

---

1 Der Abendländische Kirchenbüsse im Ausgang des Christichen Altertums (Munich, 1928), pp. 36-48.

2 l'Église et la rémission des péchés aux premiers siècles (Paris, 1932) pp. 70-97.

3 Papsttum und Bussgewalt in Spätromischer und Frühmittelalterlicher Zeit (Fribourg im Br., 1933). p. 49-83.

4 Op. Cit., p. 46

5 Op. Cit., pp. 172-203.

6 Op. Cit., pp. 70-97.

XUM

essentially in the formula which accompanies the imposition of hands for the remission of sins. The pardon of sin is assured by this absolution, even if the proper prayers for penitents were not said; the intervention of the priest is summed up in this one efficacious prayer.

The study of Goeller is an analytical one of the documents of the Popes concerning penitential power. The work of Leo on penance is also treated here.[7] His study is an examination of Leo's decretales from a disciplinary point of view. Goeller notes that the intercession of the priest, which is sacramental, is clearly distinct from the ordinary supplication of the Church. The sacerdotal prayer is not like the prayers of the people. It has a sacramental value: The divine pardon is given only by his sacerdotal prayer. Moreover, Goeller shows that there existed at Rome from the time of Leo, other forms of penance than public penance, in one degree or other. We shall have to investigate the weight of these theories as we develop our own study from the texts.

The critical editions of the letters and sermons of Leo are abundant and warrant some mention. The critical texts of this author are mostly from Ballerini who corrected the critical edition of P. Quesnel. This is what is substantially conserved for us in the collection of Migne, Patrologia Latina (Paris, 1846), vol. 54. Other primary sources of Leo's writings are available in the epistles reproduced in E. Schwartz[8] and C. Silva Tarouca[9] which have to do directly with the

---

[7] Op. Cit., pp. 49-83.

[8] Cf. bibliography, p. 10-11.

[9] Ibid., p. 11.

difficulties concerning Chalcedon and the heresy of Eutyches. We are also fortunate in having a critical edition of the sermones of Leo in the Corpus Christianorum (Vols. CXXXVIII, CXXXVIII A). We have used this critical edition throughout our study which is indicated throughout by CC.

Good translations of the sermons and letters of Leo exist in English by C. L. Feltoe,[10] in French in the series of Sources Chrétiennes[11] and in German by Th. Steeger.[12] We also have an abundant secondary bibliography on the work of Leo.[13]

Leo's teaching on penance is directly related to the sacramental power of the priest truly to forgive any and all sins of penitents in the Church and to reconcile them to God. This presupposes that such power is not human in nature but was given to the apostles and to Peter and from them to the priests who would succeed them in office of ministry. Therefore the power to forgive any and all of the sins of penitents is properly a priestly power by which and in which Christ truly acts and forgives. The preoccupation with the priestly power to forgive sins, whereby Christ acts among his people -- and the corresponding necessity for holiness in the priests -- is a major endeavor throughout the letters and sermons of Leo concerning penance.

Yet, as we shall see, this forgiveness of sins by and through the sacerdotal power is not something which is given all at once -- a later

---

[10] Ibid., p. 11.

[11] Ibid., p. 11.

[12] Ibid., p. 11.

[13] Ibid., p. 14-19.

development of individual and private penance. Rather, the sacerdotal prayer (which was, according to Leo, efficacious for the forgiveness of sins) is not limited to the final imposition of hands (the sign of forgiveness along with the prayers of intervention), but this sacerdotal prayer is efficacious for the penitent throughout the time of penance when the priest helped the penitents.

Thus the sacerdotal intervention is not only willed by God through Christ, but it was absolutely necessary for penitents if their sins were to be forgiven. The necessity and sufficiency of the sacerdotal intervention were founded on the mercy of God which, along with the conversion and penance of the penitents, resulted in the forgiveness of their sins.

We must investigate each of these aspects of penance in the works of Leo: the grandeur and humility which belongs to the priest, the intervention of the priest in the forgiveness of sins, the tasks of the priest in matters of penance, and the motivations for penance which Leo gives.

2. THE GRANDEUR AND THE HUMILITY OF THE PRIEST ACCORDING TO LEO

Leo treats of the priesthood in his discourse on the day of his episcopal consecration and in the four other discourses pronounced during the anniversary of this consecration (Sermons 1-5). We can summarize the theology therein as follows:

A. The divine attribute that one often finds expressed in these sermons seems to be that of the mercy of God. It is this emphasis on God's mercy that will lead Leo to have a rather large and merciful

view with regard to penance. It is equally in function of the divine mercy that Leo conceives the priesthood. It is the mercy and compassion of God which should inspire humility and give the priest confidence in the work of the priesthood. The priest has been chosen, not because of his merits, but by the pure grace of God.[14]

The intervention of the priest therefore is not justified because of his merits but because of the divine gifts. This will be very important when Leo develops the notion of the divine nature of the priestly power to forgive sins. From this flows a logical consequent.

B. According to Leo, it is Christ who acts in the priest. It is to Christ that we must apply the words: Tu es Sacerdos in aeternum. It is for this reason that Leo continuously repeats the idea that "he who acts in me is Christ,"[15] as a sacerdotal prayer.

---

[14] All Sermons cited from Corpus Christianorum: Sermo 2, 1 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 7): "et ut mirabilem faceret gratiam suam in eum munera contulit, in quo meritorum suffragia non invenit. Quo opere suo Dominus, quod cordibus nostris insinuat, quidve commendat, nisi ut de justitia sua nemo praesumat, et de ipsius misericordia nemo diffidat..."

Sermo 3, 1 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 10): "Quoties nobis misericordia Dei donorum suorum dies renovare dignatur, justa, delectissimi, et rationabilis causa est laetandi, si officii origo suscepti ad laudem sui referatur auctoris. Hanc enim observantiam omnibus quidem sacerdotibus congruam..."

Sermo 5, 1 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 22): "Quod quia ex divino venit munere ..." "...in quibus nec ingrati sumus tacendo de donis, nec superbi praesumendo meritis"

[15] Sermo 3, 1-2 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 10-12): "unde et Davidium psalmum, delectissimi, non ad nostram elationem, sed ad Christi Domini gloriam consona voce cantavimus. Ipse est enim de quo prophetice scriptum est: tu es sacerdos..."

"Sed cessante privilegio patrum, et familiarum ordine praetermisso, eos rectores Ecclesia accipit, quos Spiritus Sanctus preparavit..."

"Quoniam etsi multis pastoribus curam suarum ovium delegavit, ipse tamen dilecti gregis custodiam non reliquit. De cuius principali aeternoque praesidio, etiam apostolicae opis munimen accepimus, quod utique ab opere suo non vacat...Soliditas enim illius fidei, quae in apostolorum principe est laudata, perpetua est; et sicut permanet quod in Christo Petrus credidit, ita permanet quod in Petro Christus instituit"

Leo employs this theme in two different ways:

--sometimes he uses it in order to inculcate an attitude of confidence, e.g., when the priest is conscious of his own unworthiness.

--at other times he uses it to recall the motives for the priest remaining humble. The reason for this is the merciful God who acts in all the penitents.16

Thus when Leo develops the first theme (confidence) he recalls that God (or Christ) has established a covenant given by a divine oath; moreover, Leo emphasizes the spiritual presence of Christ by and in the intermediary of the priest. The two affirmations -- one more juridical, the other more spiritual or mystical -- are both in reality messages of confidence for the priest.

Thus, Leo presents two scriptural texts in juridical terms, two decreta: The first is Psalm 109:4, "The Lord has sworn, he will not repent" and the second is Matthew 16:9, equally presented as a decretum: "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."[17] Both of these

---

16 Ep. 108 (c. 1174-1175): "Cui utique operi incessabiliter ipse Salvator intervenit, nec umquam ab his abest quae ministris suis exsequenda commisit, dicens...ut si quid per servitutem nostram bono ordine et gratulando impletur effectu, non ambigamus per Spiritum Sanctum donatum"
"In dispensandis itaque Dei donis non debemus esse difficiles nec accusantium se lacrymas gemitusque negligere, cum ipsam paenitendi affectionem ex Dei credamus inspiratione conceptam dicente Apostolo..."

17 Sermo 4, 3 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 19): "hanc confessionem portae inferi non tenebunt, mortis vincula non ligabunt: vox enim ista, vox est. Et sicut confessores suos in caelestia provehit, ita negatores ad infera demergit. Propter quod dicitur b. Petro...transivit quidem etiam in alios apostolos jus potestatis istius, et ad omnes Ecclesiae principes decreti huius constitutio commeavit sed non frustra uni commendatur, quod omnibus intimetur. Petro enim ideo hoc singulariter creditur, quia cunctis Ecclesiae rectoribus Petri forma proponitur. Manet ergo Petri privilegium, ubicumque ex ipsius fertur aequitate judicium."

XUM

texts emphasize the juridical nature of the power of the priest in the forgiveness of sins.

The profound confidence of the priest is also founded on the spiritual presence of Christ in the Church. Christ is the eternal priest among his people. He is there, non-abest.[18] It is in this line of thought that Leo likes to cite Matthew 28:20 in order to establish the sacerdotal power. Leo comes back to this theme on three different occasions in the Sermones and Epistolae.[19]

Leo also develops the theme of the intervention of Christ in the person of the priest for another reason: that is, to bring to mind the imperatives which demand humility on the part of the priest. No one takes this honor to himself since it is given only by God Himself.[20]

---

[18] Sermo 5, 2-3, Cf. note 16.

[19] Sermo 5, 3 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 23): "Ipse enim verus et aeternus est Antistes, cuius administratio nec commutationem potest habere, nec finem."

Epistola 108, 2 (c-1174): "Cui utique operi incessabiliter ipse Salvator intervenit, nec umquam ab his abest quae ministris suis exquenda commisit, dicens: Ecce ego vobiscum sum..."

Epistola 267 (prologue c. 1418-1419): "Ac si vehementior tribulatio incuberit, non ita expavescamus, quasi illi adversitati probiis viribus resistendo, cum et concilium nostrum, et fortitudo sit Christus, ac sine quo nihil possumus (Jn XV:5), per ipsum cuncta possimus. Qui confirmans praedicatores Evangelii et sacramentorum ministros, Ecce ego, inquit, vobiscum sum omnibus diebus..."

[20] Sermo 5, 4 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 24): "Non est itaque nobis, dilectissimi, praesumptuosa festivitas, qua suscepti sacerdotii diem divini quod opus ministerii nostri in omnibus quae recte agimus, Christus exsequitur; et non in nobis, qui sine illo nihil possumus, sed in ipso, qui possibilitas nostra est, gloriamur."

Leo insists that the priest must pray. This intervention of the priest in the forgiveness of sins is not given to him by reason of his personal holiness but because of a divine gift of the Spirit.[21]

With these remarks of Leo, we begin to see the profoundly Christological foundation of the power of the priest. This appears clearly in his comparison of the Incarnation, the divine filiation of Christians (by baptism) and the priesthood. These three elements are mutually illuminating. This comparison is given to us in Sermo 3.[22] The development of this sermon is as follows:

--We sing psalm 109 (tu est sacerdos in aeternum) to the glory of Christ, the eternal priest. He is priest "according to the order of Melchisedech," that is, the generation of Christ is eternal.[23]

--The virginal generation of Christ is in direct spiritual generation of believers.[24] It is the same Spirit who operates in both

---

21 Sermo 2, 1; Sermo 3, 1; Sermo 5, 1 Cf. note #14

22 1 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 11): "Et dum quibus parentibus sit editus non refertus, in eo ille intelligitur ostendi, cuius generatio non potest enarrari. Denique cum huius divini sacerdotii sacramentum etiam ad humanas pervenit functiones, non per generationum tramitem, curritur, nec quod caro et sanguis creavit, eligitur; sed cessante privilegio patrum, et familiarum ordine praetermisso, eos rectores Ecclesia accipit, quos Spiritus sanctus preparavit; ut in populo adoptionis Dei, cuius universitas sacerdotalis atque regalis est, non praerogativa terrenae originis obtineat unctionem, sed dignatio caelestis gratiae gignat antistitem."

23 Ibid.

24 Cf. Sermo 24, 3 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 112-113): "Terra enim carnis humanae, quae in primo fuerat praevaricatore maledicta, in hoc solo beatae virginis partu germen ebidit benedictum, et a vitio suae stirpis alienum. Cuius spiritalem originem in regeneratione quisque consequitur: et omni homini renascenti aqua baptismatis instar est uteri virginalis, eodem Spiritu sancto replente fontem, qui replevit et virginem; ut peccatum quod ibi vacuavit sacra conceptio, hic mystica tollat ablutio."

See also Sermo 63, 6 (CC., CXXXVIII A, p. 386): "Omnia igitur quae Dei Filius ad reconciliationem mundi et fecit, et docuit, non historia tantum praeteritarum actionum novimus, sed etiam in praesentium operum virtute sentimus. Ipse est qui de Spiritu sancto editus virgine incontaminatam Ecclesiam suam eadem inspiratione fecundat, ut per baptismatis partum innumerabilis filiorum Dei multitudo gignatur..."

XUM

cases. The Church generates Christians from her womb of baptism.[25]

This spiritual regeneration of believers by the same Spirit is seen as a royal priesthood of the faithful.[26] In the people of God, which is a royal and sacerdotal people, the Holy Spirit engenders the multitude of the faithful. Christ is their true guardian and shepherd of their souls.

In this same line of thought, Leo speaks of the generation of the bishop during his consecration: Dignatio caelestis gratiae gignit antistitem.[27] It is only proper that the bishop, much like the faithful who are not generated carnally but spiritually, should also be born of a spiritual generation in his consecration.

It is therefore from the universal priesthood that Leo draws conclusions about ministerial priesthood; this universal priesthood is

---

[25] After describing the Incarnation in Sermo 29, 2 (CC. CXXXVIII,p. 147) Leo says: "Quo enim Spiritu de intermeratae matris viceribus nascitur Christus, hoc de sanctae Ecclesiae utero renascitur Christianus..."
Ep. 31, 3 (c.855-856): "De hac autem participatione mirabili sacramentum nobis regenerationis illuxit, ut per ipsum Spiritum per quem Christus et conceptus est et natus, etiam nos, qui per concupiscentiam carnis sumus geniti, spirituali, rursus origine nasceremur."

[26] Sermo 3, 1 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 11): "ut in populo adoptionis Dei, cuius universitas sacerdotalis atque regalis est, non praerogative terrenae originis obtineat unctionem, sed dignatio caelestis gratiae gignat antistitem"
Sermo 4, 1 (Ibid., p. 16): "In unitate igitur fidei atque baptismatis indescreta nobis societas, delectissimi, et generalis est dignitas, secundum illud beatissimi Petri Apostoli sacratissima voce dicentis (I Pt. 2:5,9). Omnes enim in Christo regeneratos, crucis sigefficit reges, sancti vero Spiritus unctio consecrat sacerdotes: ut praeter istam specialem nostri ministerii servitutem, universi spiritales et rationabiles Christiani agnoscant se regii generis, et sacerdotalis officii esse consortes."

[27] Sermo 3, 1 (Ibid., p. 11).

itself founded on Baptism. In turn, the bishops are not "engendered" by reason of the prestige of their family or of their personal attraction; but just as their spiritual sons, they are engendered by the Holy Spirit in and by their consecration.

C. As to the dignity of the Bishop of Rome, Leo appeals to a particular theme: The intimate participation of Peter in the powers of Christ. Leo insists strongly on the societas Petri cum Christo and that the faith and the authority of Peter survive in the faith and the authority of the Pope (Petrus redivivus). Leo thus applies the text of Matthew 16:16-19 in directo to Peter and to the Pope: It is only in obliquo that the text can be applied to the apostles and to the bishops. That is, the scriptural text applies directly to Peter and to his successors and not directly to the other apostles and their successors, the bishops.

It is in this context that Leo speaks of the power of the keys.[28]

---

[28] Sermo 3, 3 (ibid., p. 12): "Manet ergo dispositio veritatis, et beatus Petrus in accepta fortitudine petrae perseverans, suscepta Ecclesiae gubernacula non relinquit. Si enim prae caeteris est ordinatus, ut dum Petra dicitur, dum fundamentum prounuciatur, dum regni caelorum janitor constituitur, dum ligandorum solvendorumque arbiter, mansura etiam in caelis, judiciorum suorum definitione, praeficitur, qualis ipsi cum Christo esset societas, per ipsa appellationum eius mysteria nosceremus..."

"Se quid itaque a nobis recte agitur, recteque discernitur, si quid a misericordia Dei quotidianis supplicationibus obtinetur, illius est operum atque meritorum cuius in sede sua vivit potestas, et excellit auctoritas."

Sermo 4, 3, 4 (ibid., pp. 19-20): "Hanc confessionem portae inferi non tenebunt, mortis vincula non ligabunt: vox enim ista, vox vitae est. Et sicut confessores suos in caelestia provehis, ita negatores ab inferna demergit. Propter quod dicitur beatissimo Petro: tibi dabo... Transivit quidem etiam in alios apostolos jus potestatis istius, et ad omnes Ecclesiae principes decreti huius constitutio commeavit; sed non frustra uni commendatur, quod omnibus intimetur. Petro enim ideo hoc singulariter creditur, quia cunctis Ecclesiae rectoribus Petri forma praeponitur. Manet ergo Petri privilegium ubicumque ex ipsius fertur aequitate judicium."

XUM

This power is exercised both in the discernment as well as in supplication. The exact judgment of the Pope is founded, in the last analysis, on the correct moderation and judgment of Peter.[29] The efficacy of the daily sacerdotal supplication is based on the apostolic merits of St. Peter. This societas Petri cum Christo is also valid for the other successors of the apostolic authority in the Church.[30]

D. Leo also attaches the sacerdotal power of the remission of sins to the power of the Spirit. There can be no remission of sins without the aid of the Spirit who "prays" by and through believers and whose power to forgive sins is given over to the apostles. In this, Leo cites John 20:22-23: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."[31] It is therefore by the power of the Spirit that the priests can forgive the sins of others.

(28 cont.) "Cum itaque, dilectissimi, tantum nobis videamus praesidium divinitus institutum, rationabiliter et juste in ducis nostri meritis et dignitate laetamur, gratias agentes semiterno regi Redemptori nostro Domino Jesu Christo, quod tantam potentiam dedit ei quem totius Ecclesiae principem fecit, ut si quid etiam nostris temporibus recte per nos agitur, recteque disponitur, illius operibus, illius sit gubernaculis deputandum, cui dictum est:..."

29 Sermo 5, 5 (CC., CXXXVIII, pp. 24-25): "Ut manente apud vos jure ligandi atque solvendi, per moderamen beatissimi Petri et condemnatus ad paenitentiam, et reconciliatus perducatur ad veniam."
Sermo 4, 3. Cfr. note #28.

30 Sermo 3, 3. Cf. note #28.

31 Sermo 76, 4 (CC.,CXXXVIII A, p. 477): "Unde manifestum est peccatorum remissionem sine Spiritus sancti advocatione non fieri, nec quemquam sine illo, sicut expedit, ingemiscere, aut sicut oportet, orare, dicente Apostolo (Rom. 8:26; I Cor. 13:3)...Omnes igitur, dilectissimi, qui in Dominum Jesum crediderant, infusum sibi habebant Spiritum sanctum, et remittendorum peccatorum etiam tunc apostoli acceperant potestatem, quando post resurrectionem suam Dominus insufflavit, et dixit: Accipe Spiritum sanctum:..."

XUM

3. HOW DOES LEO MOTIVATE HIS DECISIONS IN MATTERS OF PENANCE?

The major problem which was posed was penance in extremis. The two questions asked were:

--Can one reconcile the penitent immediately after confession?

--Can one pray for those who had died unreconciled?

On the problem of penance conferred in extremis, the Roman Church as well as the Church of Gaul had adopted attitudes which differed in more than one point. One can sum up the most notable differences as follows:

At Rome, the practice involved the absolute necessity of a double sacerdotal intervention: One to give or impose penance and the other, to reconcile. Without both of these interventions, there was no forgiveness of sin.[32] In the matter of the penitential effort, there was a rather large attitude: In extremis, the sincere confession could be followed immediately by reconciliation.

In Gaul, there existed a much more rigorous position, that is, the necessity of a full and complete satisfaction; whence, there was no admission to penance and to reconciliation for those in extremis. Yet, there was a certain largeness with regard to the prayer for the dead who had been contrite but not reconciled.

---

32 Epistola 108, 2 (c. 1174): " Multiplex misericordia Dei ita lapsibus subvenit humanis, ut non solum per baptismati gratiam, sed etiam per poenitentiae medicinam spes vitae reparetur aeternae, ut qui regenerationis dona violassent, proprio se judicio condemnentes, ad remissionem criminum pervenirent: sic divinae bonitatis praesidiis ordinatis, ut indulgentia Dei nisi supplicantionibus sacerdotum nequeat obtineri. Mediator enim Dei et hominum homo Christus Jesus hanc praepositis Ecclesiae tradidit potestatem..."

What was the theological motivation for these disciplinary attitudes? Was the attitude of the Church of Gaul inspired by a certain form of Novatianism or Pelagianism?

A. Poschmann and E. Goeller both trace this Gallic rigorism, which consisted in refusing immediate reconciliation (without penance) in extremis, to a semi-Pelagianism. Thus Faustus of Riez, who in general underlines the personal and necessary effort for salvation, would have been led to refuse immediate reconciliation in extremis, because of semi-Pelagianism.

B. Vogel states that although one can suspect the Bishop of Riez of this heresy, it would be better to call it a semi - Novatianism rather than semi-Pelagianism.[33]

C. Munier sees simply a legitimate pastoral reaction.[34] What do we think of these interpretations?

Certainly, Pope Innocent I in his decretale to Exuperius of Toulouse justifies the Roman largesse toward those in extremis by an anti-Novatianism.[35] Gennadius of Marseilles taxes the rigorists of Gaul as

---

[33] La Discipline pénitentielle en Gaule des origines à la fin du VII[e] siècle (Paris, 1952), pp. 49-50.

[34] Les Statuta Ecclesiae antiqua (Paris, 1960), pp. 210-211.

[35] Cf. P.L. 20, c. 498-501 and Enchiridion Symbolorum (editio XXXIII, 1960): "Quaesitum est, quid de his observari oporteat, qui post baptismum omni tempore incontinentiae voluptatis dediti, in extremo fine vitae suae poenitentiam simul et reconciliationem communionis exposcunt. De his observatio prior durior, posterior interveniente misericordia inclinatior (est). Nam consuetudo prior tenuit,ut concederetur (eis poenitentia, sed communio negaretur). Nam cum illis temporibus crebrae persecutiones essent, ne communionis concessa facilitas homines de reconciliatione securos non revocaret a lapsu,merito negata communio est, concessa poenitentia, ne totum poenitus negaretur: et duriorem remissionem fecit temporis ratio. Sed postquam Dominus noster pacem Ecclesiis suis reddidit, jam terrore depulso communionem dari abeuntibus placuit, ut propter Domini misericordiam quasi viaticum profecturis, et ne Novatiani haere-

Novatians. This could be answered by saying that it was common in those days -- as today -- to accuse one's adversaries by calling them a name well known by all.

In any case, the position of the Church of Gaul was simply traditional, as Innocent I himself states in the same decretale. Ambrose moreover said that a brevis lacrymula did not suffice for penance. The Bishops of Gaul demanded a serious penance before reconciliation. None of them doubted the mercy of God as did Novatian and his followers. They took seriously the penitential effort.

The noli tardare was, moreover, a pastoral reaction which was very general and came to a head toward the end of the fifth century in Gaul.[36]

However, this rigor went along with a certain anti-Augustinianism (semi-Pelagianism) of Faustus. In fact, in his Epistola 5,[37] where Faustus excludes the immediate reconciliation after confession, he insists on the agendi utilitas, the importance of action and opera, and even on merits; there must be, he continues, a certain equivalence between the length of the life of sin and penance, an equilibrium between sins and the merits of penance. There must be a satisfactio in order

---

(35 cont.) tici negantis veniam asperitatem et duritiam sequi videamur. Tribuitur ergo cum penitentia extrema communio: ut homines huiusmodi vel in extremis suis, permittente Salvatore nostro, a perpetuo exitio vindicentur," Cf. C.H. Turner, "The 'in extremis' of Pope Innocent I," Journal of Theological Studies, 13 (1912), pp. 80-86; see also Palmer, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

36 Cf. Faustus of Riez, Sermo 4, 14 ed. Aug. Engelbrecht: CSEL, 21, 170-178; also Sermo 3 (P.L. 58, c. 875); and Caesarius of Arles Sermo 66, 3; See also Sermo 261 (P.L. 39, c. 2227).

37 ad Paulinum (CSEL, 21, 180).

to fill with merits the cups of demerits.

We may also note as well that Caesarius of Arles[38] takes up almost literally the considerations of Faustus.[39] against the delay of penance and against faith without works; but he derives (as Faustus did not) merit or works from the mercy of God. Thus he avoided the rigorism of Faustus.

It is against this rigorism that the Roman discipline was opposed, based on an anti-Novatianism, and in Leo, on an optimistic Augustinianism.

Before going back to Leo, let us consider two points.

1. The decretale of Innocent I to Exuperius of Toulouse.[40] Innocent recognized that at Rome there was a certain tendency to leniency after the persecutions, which justified a rigorism. But the fear of falling into a Novatian rigorism henceforth led the Church of Rome to insist on the mercy of God.

2. The decretale of Celestine I to the bishops of Vienne and Narbonne.[41] Celestine invoked as motive for leniency the mercy of God who, as such, can be satisfied with only a moment of conversion and

---

38 Sermo 209.

39 Ep. 5 (CSEL, 21, 180).

40 Ep. 6 (P.L. 20, c. 498). Cf. note #35.

41 Ep. 4, 2 (P.L. 50, c. 431 B): "Agnovimus paenitentiam morientibus denegari nec illorum desideriis annui, qui obitus sui tempore hoc animae suae cupiunt remedio subveniri. Horremus, fateor, tantae impietatis aliquem reperire, ut de Dei pietate desperet quasi non possit ad se quovis tempore concurrenti succurrere et pericitantem sub onere peccatorum hominem pondere, quo se ille expedire desiderat, liberare. Quid hoc, rogo aliud est, quam morienti mortem addere, eiusque animam sua credelitate, ne absoluta esse possit, occidere? Cum Deus ad subveniens quacumque die" conversus fuerit, peccata eius non imputabuntur ei...Cum ergo sit Dominus cordis inspector, quovis tempore non est deneganda paenitentia postulanti." See also D.B.S.,236; Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum nova Collectio, IV, 465 B.

penance. He also makes allusion to the good thief on the cross. To refuse penance in extremis, is, in the final analysis, to despair of the mercy of God. We are now very far from the notion of equivalence of penance with sin (Faustus and Caesarius of Arles). Celestine concluded by saying that a vera confessio must be made but that it need not be measured by time.

Thus we come to the decretales or disciplinary directives of Leo the Great. In his epistola 108, the great motive of penance and leniency is the divine mercy (anti-Novatian motive).[42] This mercy acts not only in baptism but also in penance.[43] There is no measure to this mercy and therefore one ought not to be difficult in dispensing it to sinners.[44]

The gratuity and free gift of the mercy of God was an idea very close to the heart and thinking of Leo. It is even from this basic

---

[42] Ep. 108, 2 (c. 1174): "Multiplex misericordia dei ita lapsibus subvenit humanis, ut non solum per baptismi gratiam, sed etiam per paenitentiae medicinam spes vitae reparetur aeternae, ut qui regenerationis dona violassent..:sic divinae bonitatis praesidiis ordinatis, ut indulgentia Dei..."

[43] See also Ep. 167, (c. 1417)(Ad Rusticum Narbonensen): "Circa quos quam formam quamve measuram debeas tenere justitiae, tuo relinquo moderamini: suadens tamen charitatis hortatu, ut sanandis aegris spiritalem adhibere debeas medicinam; et dicente Scriptura: Noli esse nimirum justus, mitius agas cum eis qui pudicitiae zelo videntur modum excessisse vindictae."

[44] Sermo 108, 4 (c. 1175 only in P.L.): "Quis misericordiae Dei nec mesuras possumus ponere, nec tempora definire, apud quem nullas patitur veniae moras vera conversio; dicente Spiritu Dei per prophetam: Cum conversus ingenueris, tunc salvus eris: Is. 30:15. Et alibi: Dic tu iniquitates tuas prior, ut misericordia est, et copiosa apud eum redemptio Ps. 129:7. In dispensandis itaque Dei donis non debemus esse difficilis, nec accusantium se lacrymas gemitusque negligere, cum ipsam paenitendi affectionem ex Dei credamus inspiratione conceptam, dicente Apostolo: Ne forte det illis Deus poenitentiam, ut respicscant a Diaboli laqueis, a quo captivi tenentur ad ipsius voluntatem, II Tim. 2:25-26."

XUM

orientation that Leo preaches the mercy which Christians ought to show among themselves.[45] Like God, Christians cannot be "difficult" in reconciliation about their faults against one another; in context, Leo gives an analogy between the reconciliation in the Church and in families, that is, by the priests and by the faithful, each in their own proper way. In fact, he who does not forgive, will not be forgiven.[46]

This same leniency of "facility" or reconciliation is recommended in the prologue of Epistola 167. The facility which the Church should show ought to be inspired by the mercy or leniency of God.[47]

The Epistola 164, 4 shows clearly that only the divine mercy is the cause of pardon, and not our merits or efforts.[48] All this comes

---

[45] Sermo 50, 3 (CC., CXXXVIII A, p. 294): "Et quia nemo non peccat, nemo non difficulter praestemus quod gratulanter acceptimus: ut sive largitate eleemosynarum, sive indulgentia peccatorum, quando magis fuerimus misericordes, tanto simus perfectius innocentes."

[46] Sermo 49, 5 (ibid., pp. 289-290): "Non simus in remissione difficiles: quia ad nos recurrit sive cupiditas ultionis, sive indulgentia lenitatis; magisque optandum est homini, tentationum periculis semper exposito, ut suas culpas habeat impuritas, quam ut plectat alienas. Quid autem convenientius fidei Christianae quam ut non solum in Ecclesia, sed etiam in omnibus domibus fiat remissio peccatorum? Deponatur minae; vincula relaxentur, quibus se multo perniciosius, qui ea non solverit, religabit."

[47] "Constanter tenenda est justitia, et benigna praestanda clementia. Odio habeantur peccata, non homines. Corripiantur tumidi. Tollerentur infirmi; et quod in peccatis severius castigari necesse est, non saevientis plactatur animo, sed medentis."

[48] (c. 1347): "Quod ergo in sanctae Ecclesiae pervasione et in praesulis ipsius crudelissima caede impius parricida commisit, non potest humanis remissionibus expiari, nisi ille exoretur qui talia et solus potest digne plectere, et solus ineffabili misericordia relaxare."

XUM

from a certain optimistic Augustinianism.[49]

In sum, against a pastoral rigorism (which was non-Augustinian and which had taken hold in Gaul), Leo insists, in the Roman tradition and because of the anti-Novatian struggle --on the divine mercy. Pope Celestine and above all Leo spread the optimism of the Augustinian views on the relationship between grace and our human merits: It is the divine mercy which is principally responsible for forgiveness and not human effort.

Leo also established the relationship between the divine mercy and the intervention of the priest. One of the motives which inclined him to this generous clemency was that the priest was the minister of the divine mercy and therefore must be like God: always kind and full of mercy toward sinners.

4. THE TASKS OF THE PRIEST IN PENANCE

It is the duty of the priest "to give penance" and "to admit to communion" (the final reconciliation properly speaking). These two sacerdotal functions are described as beneficia and remedia.

It is not always easy to determine exactly how these words are applied. Sometimes they designate the whole ensemble of the penitential reconciliation and sometimes they are reserved for the end of the public penance. Thus we may observe the following situations:

---

[49] Cf. Herve de L'Incarnation, "La grâce dans l'oeuvre de St. Léon Le Grand," RTAM, 2 (1955), pp. 17-55, 193-212; see also E. Dekkers, art. cit., pp. 370-375.

XUM

A. In one group of texts, these words refer to public penance considered globally: Epistola 159, 6;[50] Epistola 167, 2 (here the sacerdotal intervention makes of penance a remedium);[51] Sermo 35, 4.[52] This same way of speaking is also found in Ambrose. That is, these texts speak of penance in its total view from its inception to final reconciliation.

B. On the other hand, in Leo, the term remedium is more often applied to the final stage of penance. We can see this in Epistola 108, 3, where we have the case of Christians who have died while the Church was already praying for them but did not yet arrive at the final term

---

50 (c. 1333): "...ea custodienda est moderatio, qua in societatem nostram non nisi per poenitentiae remedium et per impositionem episcopalis manus, communionis recipiant unitatem; tempora poenitudinis, habita moderatione, tuo constituente judicio, prout conversorum animos perspexeris esse dovotos: pariter etiam habens senilis aetatis intuitum, et periculorum quorumque aut aegritudinis respiciens necessitates. In quibus si quis graviter urgeatur, ut jam adhuc poenitet, de salute ipsius desperetur, opertet ei per sacerdotalem sollicitudinem communionis gratia subvenire."

51 (c. 1421): "Alienum est a consuetudine ecclesiastica ut qui in presbyterali honore aut in diaconii gradu fuerint consecrati, ii pro crimine aliquo suo per manus impositionem remedium accipiant poenitendi: quod sine dubio ex apostolica traditione descendit, secundum quod scriptum est:...Unde huiusmodi lapsis, ad promerendam misericordiam Dei, privata est expetenda seccessio..."

52 (CC., CXXXVIII, p. 193): "Inter haec autem permanet super omnes benignitas Dei, et nulli misericordiam suam denegat, cum indiscrete universis bona multa largiatur, eosque quos merito subderet poenis, mavult invitare beneficiis. Dilatio enim vindictae dat locum poenitentiae. Nec tamen dici potest nulla ibi esse ultio, ubi nulla conversio est, quia mens dura et ingrata jam sibi ipsa supplicium est, et in conscientia sua patitur quid Dei Bonitate differtur. Non ita igitur delinquentes peccata delectent, ut illos in suis actibus vitae huius finis inveniat; quoniam in inferno nulla est correctio, nec datur remedium satisfactionis."

XUM

of penance (constituta remedia).[53] It is clear that Leo is referring to the final act of penance which is that of reconciliation to God by the power of the priest. We have other texts showing the same thing, such as Epistola 167, 8 (usque ad Communionis remedium);[54] Sermo 49, 3 (ad remedia reconciliationis admitti);[55] Epistola 164, 5 (poenitentiae remedium non negetur);[56] all of which bear witness to the same reality of the terminal point of penance, which is reconciliation.

One can also note at this point that in the Leonine Sacramentary, the term remedium is applied to the Eucharist. In number 1.087, the sacrifice (sacrificium = Missa) is defined as a remedium.[57]

Thus, in Leo, the term remedium has often a penitential meaning.

---

53 (c. 1174-1175): "Si autem aliquis eorum pro quibus Domino supplicamus, quocumque interceptus obstaculo, a munere indulgentia praesentis exciderit, et pruisquam ad constituta remedia perveniat, temporalem vitam humana conditione finierit, quod manens in corpore non recepit, consequi exutus carne non poterit. Nec necesse est nos eorum qui sic obierint merita actusque discutere, cum Dominus Noster, cuius judicia nequeunt comprehendi, quod sacerdotale ministerium inplere non potuit, suae justitae reservaverit."

54 (c. 1423): "Horum causa Dei iudicio reservanda est, in cuius manu fuit ut talium obitus usque ad communionis remedium differretur. Nos autem quibus viventibus communicavimus, mortuis communicare non possumus".

55 (CC., CXXXVIII A, p. 288): "Lapsos quoque et insidiarum suarum fraude deceptos, poenitentiae lacrymis ablui, et portas misericordiae apostolica clave reserante, ad remedia reconciliationis admitti."

56 (c. 1348): "ut et legitima satisfactione correctis poenitentiae remedium non negetur, et in resultantes sententia synodalis, quae veritatis est plena, permaneat."

57 See also No. 870 and 531. We must note here that many authors doubt the authority of truly Leonine texts in the Leonine Sacramentary. This is true but we mention the text here not so much for its authenticity as for the fact that whoever wrote these texts, tried to keep faithful to the fundamental teaching, as well as vocabulary of Leo, cf. the remedia reconciliationis in Sermo 49, 3 (CC., p. 288).

XUM

In this sense, by this term Leo designates either the reconciliation itself as final act of penance or the whole of the penitential discipline.

A. The Attitudes of the Priest

In the exercise of this double task of remedium and reconciliatio --along the whole process of penance and at its end -- the priest must adopt two attitudes: discernere and supplicare.

As to the word discernere, it is found in various texts of Leo. Christ must become the very consilium of the priest. These attitudes do not necessarily correspond to the two sacerdotal acts. Judgment and supplication are brought about at different moments in the penitential process. In all things we need trust and confidence since Christ is our strength and counsel.[58]

As to the word supplicare, it belongs to a sacerdotal supplication to which the divine mercy is tied. It can be used both as a daily supplication and as a final supplication in the penitential process. In other words, we would do violence to the texts by reducing this supplication only to the final one used in the process of reconciliation in

---

58 Ep. 159, 6 (c. 1333): "...ea custodienda est moderatio, qua in societatem nostram non nisi per poenitentiae remedium, et per impositionem episcopalis manus, communionis recipiant unitatem; tempore poenitudinis, habita moderatione, tuo constituente judicio..."
Ep. 167 (Prologue, c. 1418): "Ac si vehementior tribulatio incubuerit, eonita expavescamus, quasi illi adversitati propriis viribus resistendo, cum et consilium nostrum, et fortitudo sit Christus, ac sine quo nihil possumus (Jn. 15:5) per ipsum cuncta possumus" cf. M.M. Mueller, op. cit., pp. 207-217.

XUM

penance. In a more detailed way, we may observe the following:

1. Daily Supplications: As a judge, arbiter and bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, the priest discerns or judges the supplication that one addresses daily for the sinners. That is, the divine power of forgiveness, given once to Peter by Christ, is continued in the discernment of the priest.[59]

With regard to the secret confession, Leo notes that it suffices to confess to God and to the priest qui praecator acedat. The priest can present himself as a supplicant in favor of the penitent. The supplication of the priest will accompany the penitent: Confessio quae primum Deo offertur, tum etiam sacerdoti, qui pro delictis poenitentium praecator accedat. Any revelation of this is against, in the words of Leo, "the Apostolic rule" (apostolicam regulam).[60]

The mercy of God is tied to the prayer of the priest and is an

---

[59] Sermo 3, 3 (CC., pp. 12-13): "Manet ergo dispositio veritatis, et beatus Petrus in accepta fortitudine petrae perseverans, suscepta Ecclesiae gubernacula non reliquit. Sic enim prae caeteris est ordinatur, ut dum petra dicitur, dum fundamentum pronunciatur, dum regni caelorum janitor constituitur, dum ligandorum solvendorumque arbiter, mansura etiam in caelis judiciorum suorum definitione, praeficitur, qualis ipsi cum Christo esset societas, per ipsa appellationum eius mysteria noscere-mus. Qui nunc plenius et potentius ea quae sibi commisa sunt peragit, et omnes partes officiorum atque curarum in ipso et cum ipso, per quem discernitur, si quid a misericordia Dei quotidianis supplicationibus obtinetur, illius est operum atque meritorum, cuius in sede sua vivit potestas, et excellit auctoritas."

Ep. 108, 3 (c. 1174): "Si autem aliquis eorum pro quibus Domino supplicamus, quocumque interceptus obstaculo, a munere indulgentiae praesentis exciderit, et priusquam ad constituta remedia perveniat, temporalem vitam humana conditione finierit..."

[60] Ep. 168, 2 (c. 1430-31). See also D.B.S., N. 323.

absolute condition for this forgiveness: This prayer is the final prayer and absolution; it also helps the penitent in his painful journey to reconciliation itself.[61]

2. As to the final supplication, two texts are clear in this regard: Epistola 108[62] and Epistola 159.[63] Both of these texts show very clearly the necessity for the priestly intervention by the divine will.

In either the daily or the final supplication, it is always the supplication of the priest which is determinant. There is little question in Leo of the supplication of the people in the penitential process. One simply does not find in Leo any recursus to the faithful.

Contrary to this, one would be tempted to advance Epistola 171 where the praeces Ecclesiae are mentioned. Yet, one should immediately remark that in this epistle it is a question of the reconciliation of heretical clerics. Therefore, it is not a question here of a penitential reconciliation properly speaking.[64] In Leo, the adage remains: If there is no sacerdotal supplication, no imposition of hands, no sacer-

---

[61] Ep. 108, 2 (c. 1174): "Mediator enim dei et hominum homo Christus Jesus hanc praepositis Ecclesiae tradidit . . . , potestatem, ut et confitentibus actionem poenitentiae et eosdem salubri satisfactione purgatos, ad communionem sacramentorum per januam reconciliationis admitterent."

[62] 3: "...ut peccatorum reatus ante illam ultimam diem sacerdotali supplicatione solvatur..."

[63] 6 (c. 1333): "in quibus si quis ita graviter urgeatur, ut dum adhuc poenitet, de salute ipsius desperetur, oportet ei per sacerdotalem sollicitudinem communionis gratia subvenire."

[64] Ep. 171, 1 (P.L. 54, c. 1435): "ita isti per omnia tua devotione famulante, ut etiam eos qui veritate aliquatenus restiterunt, reconciliationis Dei per Ecclesiae praeces instanter acquiras..."

dotal intervention there is no forgiveness of sins.

The sacerdotal supplication is essentially related to mercy, to the humble recognition of our dependence on God. In giving mercy, the priest also prays for himself. These ideas are very pronounced in the Indiculus Coelestini.[65]

As we saw in Epistola 167, Leo exhorts priests to confidence. This confidence is founded upon the spiritual presence of him who said: ecce ego vobiscum sum. If everything is conducted without fault (bono ordine) up to the completion of penance, we can abandon ourselves to the joy of God in all confidence (non ambigamus). The argument coming from the divine mercy is combined with the argument of the priesthood so as to join them as one.[66]

Thus one can readily understand that Leo establishes no distinction between the reconciliatio Ecclesiae and the reconciliatio in foro caelesti. The ecclesial reconciliation is the reconciliation with Christ. There is never any question in Leo of a reconciliation with the Church.

---

[65] D.B.S. 238-249 (P.L. 51, c. 205-212) Cardinal Ballerini places this work in his S. Leonis I Opera, t. 2 (Venetiae, 1756), pp. 251-257 but was probably from Prosper of Aquitaine.

[66] Sermo 20, 3 (CC., p. 83) "ut nemo ambigat, nemo diffidat regenerationis sibi nitorem etiam post multa peccata restitui, qui eleemosynarum studerit purificatione mundari."
Sermo 48, 4 (CC., p. 283): "...non ambigamus per nostrae orationis formam, divinam nos obtinere clementiam.
Ep. 108, 2 gives us the need of the intervention of the priest in penance. Cf. note #53.

XUM

Moreover, the term "reconciliation" is used to designate the reconciliation of the world with God. Reconciliation is the remission of sins. One would search in vain in Leo for ulterior distinctions between the absolution of the poenae and the absolution of sin, etc. as was done later in the Middle Ages and in the later manuals of theology.

For Leo, the reconciliation of man with God is brought about by the priest in whom Christ acts, both in the judgment of the priests as well as in his prayer. This sacerdotal prayer is not limited to the last imposition of hands, but effects the whole time-process in which penance endures. The necessity and the sufficiency of the priestly intervention is founded on:

--the mercy of God (which, of course, does not dispense the sinner from his conversion);

--the confidence in the action of God which operates in the priest, without however making appeal to the merits of the priest (against any form of Donatism).

There is no trace in Leo of the theory in penance which attempts to distinguish the remissio poenae from the remissio reatus.

B. Clerics are Excluded from Public Penance

1. At Rome, from the end of the fourth century[67] and at least to the end of the seventh century,[68] clerics were excluded from public penance. One cannot reintegrate, by the imposition of hands of the canonical penance, a cleric who has fallen. In later centuries, the

---

[67] Cf. Letter of Pope Siricius to Himerius, D.B.S., 181-182 (P.L. 13, 1132 C, 1146 A).

[68] Cf. Gregory the Great recalls this ecclesiastical custom on occasion Regula 5, 4.

XUM

custom faded and, in the eleventh century, it disappeared altogether.

This rule of clerical exclusion was already established for Rome and Africa by the Council of 313. Donatus confessed willingly that he rebaptized and imposed hands on bishops who had fallen; this avowal seems to signify that, normally, it was the bishops who reintegrated the community without having placed on themselves any form of public penance (in poenitentiam).

A similar practice existed at Rome for the return of heretical and schismatic clerics. They were received in the Church without having hands placed on them in poenitentiam.[69] Leo himself imposed, as the only condition for reintegration of such bishops from heresy, a profession of faith. The imposition of hands is excluded, especially in re-admitting the clerics and bishops from Novatianism.[70]

---

[69] Cf. St. Augustine, De Baptismo Contra Donatistas, cited by Poschmann, Op. Cit., p. 180; Jerome also cites this practice in his Dialogus Orthodoxi et Luciferani, 4-5 where he cites the rule against imposing hands on bishops returning from heresy.

[70] Ep. 1, 2 (c. 591) "Damnent apertis professionibus suis superbi erroris auctores, et quidquid in doctrina eorum universalis Ecclesia exhorruit, detestentur; omniaque decreta synodalia, quae ad excisionem huius haereseos apos tolicae sedis confirmavit auctoritas, amplecti se et in omnibus approbare, plenis et apertis ac propria manu subscriptis protestationibus eloquantur".

Ep. 12, 6 (c. 665): "Donatum autem Salicinensem ex Novatianis cum sua, ut comperimus, plebe conversu, ita Dominico gregi volumus praesidere, ut libellum fidei suae ad nos meminerit dirigendum, quo et Novatiani dogmatis damnet errorem, et plenissime confiteatur Catholicam veritatem. Maximum quoque ex laico licet reprehensibiliter ordinatum, tamen si Donatista jam non est, et a spiritu schimaticae pravitatis alienus, ab episcopali, quam quoquo modo adeptus est, non repellimus dignitate."

Ep. 18 (c. 731): "Saluberrimum enim et spiritalis medicinae utilitate plenissimum est, ut sive presbyteri, sive diaconi, vel subdiaconi, aut cuiuslibet ordinis clerici, qui se correctos videri volunt, atque ad Catholicam fidem, quam jam pridem amiserant, rursum reverti ambiunt, prius errores suis et ipsos auctores damnari a se sine ambiguitate fateantur...Circa quos etiam illam canonum constitutionem praecipimus custodiri, ut in magno habeant beneficio..."

At Rome, this practice of the exclusion of clerics from canonical penance went together with the penitential interdict: A penitent could not be admitted into the clergy. One could ask whether the bond between these two usages did not already exist at the Council of Rome (313). There, views were expressed according to which the imposition of hands on fallen bishops would not in fact be equivalent to "breaking" them as bishops. In any hypothesis, it is certain that the connection between these two mentioned exclusions, existed in the letter of Pope Siricius to Himerius of Tarragona (385).[71]

To do penance signified, for a bishop, to be deposed.

2. Yet, this practice was far from general. In the third century, Cyprian imposed penance on clerics and priests. This custom (of Rome) does not seem to have been widespread in Gaul. And it is this which explains the difficulties encountered by Leo in his exchanges with the bishops of Gaul. The Councils of Orange[72] and Arles[73] envisioned the giving of penance to dying clerics. In the East,[74] the general rule followed was simply non bis de eodem, i.e. one need not add

---

[71] P.L. 13 c. 1145, III Cap. XIV. 18: "Illud quoque nos par fuit providere, ut sicut poenitentiam agere cuiquam non conceditur clericorum..." But no one is refused viaticum: "Et si versi, his quam diu vivant, agenda poenitentia est, et in ultimo fine suo reconciliationis gratia tribuenda." (ibid., III, 18 c. 1136).

[72] D.B.S. 374: Canon 4.

[73] Canon 29.

[74] Cf. Cappuyns, "L'origine des 'Capitula d'Orange", RTAM. 6 (1934), pp. 121-142. Cf. the Apostolic Canons, 25 & St. Basil, Ep. 188, 3.

deposition and excommunication of clerics -- it is sufficient to degrade them.

It follows from these considerations that the fact that penance was not imposed on clerics was a favorable measure; it sufficed to degrade them.

Having established the existence at Rome of the custom of excluding clerics from public penance, we must now see what motivated such a custom.

First of all, Optatus of Milevium and Augustine considered that the imposition of hands, essential to penance, would be an insult to the sacrament of orders. To impose hands on clerics and priests would be to bring hands against the anointed of God and to pretend to destroy what God has built.[75]

Let us note here in the interest of justice and objectivity that these authors had such motives when confronting the question of the reintegration of heretical bishops and not in the precise context envisioned here (i.e., the reconciliation of bishops who were sinners).

Secondly, in the Decretum Siricii, the exclusion of clerics from canonical penance appears clearly as a refusal of a favor. The sin of a priest is presented as so enormous that, as a counter measure, he is refused penance; perhaps we ought to see in this a still lingering vestige of the idea of irremissible sin. The cleric is rejected from Eucharistic communion, at least until his death, for viaticum is refused

---

75 Optatus, Contra Donatistas, II, 5 and the "injuria sacramenti" of St. Augustine. Cf. Traité anti Donatistes, I. Introduction (Paris, 1963), pp. 29-39.

to no one. Penance is therefore a favor from which the fallen cleric is excluded. This document seems to indicate clearly an internal contradiction between the sacerdotal honor and sin. Priestly sin was so enormous that, in practical effect, it was irremissible except for viaticum.

Thirdly, the writings of Leo have an entirely different attitude and sound. The fallen cleric does not do public penance but enters into a seccessio privata or fructuosa. It is not always easy to determine what is the nature or fruit of this "private retreat"; it is probable that the communio laicorum was accorded to them if they gave proof of worthy conduct; but they probably remained excluded from the order of clerics.

Thus, then, for Leo, public penance is a favor which is not accorded either to the deacon or to the priest. If given, it had the effect of degrading him.

Why were clerics excluded from access to this favor? To this question, Leo responds with the words: Quis orabit pro illo? The priest must be his own mediator. This same text could signify for the Luciferiani that the sin of the priest was unforgivable; no one could pray or intercede for this crime. This opinion of the Luciferiani was moreover written into their history; namely, that of the idea of unforgivable sin. Primitively, unforgivable sins were sins against God (Cf. I Kings 2:25). Ambrose had already overcome the problem: The priest can intercede for sins against God. It was here that the Luciferiani inserted their view of unforgivable sin: The sin of the priest appeared to them as unforgivable. Leo, in his turn, will consider that the

priest is not the intercessor for a fallen priest and from this follows the conclusion: He must pray for himself.[76]

5. Penance in Leo: Some Conclusions

As was the case with Ambrose, the texts do not warrant any description of the liturgical ceremony of the reconciliation of penitents. We do know from the texts of Innocent I and from the Council of Rome (313) that because of the large number of penitents, the administration of penance was decentralized to the various "stations" around Rome (priest - penitentiaries) but it is also certain in the texts of Leo, that only the bishop actually reconciled penitents on Maundy Thursday. This was also the witness of the Roman Archdeacon at the end of the fifth century.

It is also clear in Leo that the role of the people in penance (intercession, assembly of prayer, etc.) was extremely limited in contrast to Ambrose and the Roman Archdeacon who emphasize this point. Leo rather emphasizes the reconciliation of men with God brought about by the prayer and intercession of the priest in whom Christ acts, both in his judgment and in his prayers. This sacerdotal prayer, moreover, is not confined to the final imposition of hands (Innocent I), but is efficacious throughout the time of penance. This prayer of the priest, his ministerium, is founded on the mercy of God and not on the merits of the priest.

In the West of the fifth century, there appears to be only one grade, the ordo penitentium, at the close of which the sinner was reconciled to the Eucharist. As was the case with Ambrose, it is uncertain

---

[76] Sermo 5, 1 (CC., pp. 22).

in Leo whether there was a separate ceremony of reconciliation of the penitents on Maundy Thursday or whether in fact, the reconciliation was in the very act of the eucharistic reception. It is reasonable to conclude that reconciliation was given at Rome by the imposition of hands as described for us by Innocent I (402 -417), but this is not present in the texts of Leo.

Penance was also associated with severe disabilities after the reconciliation. Our earliest witness to this is Pope Siricius (394 - 398). A person who had been a penitent could not marry nor resume marital relations with his wife. Such a person could not engage in commerce or attend public amusements. Failure to observe these disabilities reduced the reconciled to the status of bystander. Leo attenuated many of these penitential rigors and it was his influence which set the tone for a more merciful attitude toward the reconciled.

What is also of great influence on the later evolution of penance was Leo's attitude toward the recidivist who was excluded from public penance. He was thus deprived of the Church's public intercession and the assistance of the congregation in expiating his sin. But -- at the insistance of Leo and the Roman pontifs before him -- the recidivist was to be reconciled at the approach of death. Faustus of Riez, for example, said that he did not see the utility of reconciliation at the approach of death, but it could not be denied. The reason for this might well be the attitude of mercy of the Roman pontiffs who refused to be rigorist in this respect. Leo was their most outstanding example and from that time on, only the most rigorist bishops refused to reconcile the dying recidivists.

XUM

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMAN LITURGICAL RITE AND PRAYERS OF RECONCILIATION OF THE FIFTH CENTURY

1. Introduction

Perhaps one of the best criteria for determining the thinking on penance during the period of the fifth century (the culminating point of ancient penance) is to examine the liturgical prayers and rites of penance and reconciliation of this period. Herein, it cannot be our objective to examine all of the penitential rites of the Western Church of the fifth century. It will be sufficient for our purpose here to examine the theological themes which come through these prayers of the Roman rite of the fifth century as given to us in one document.

What we have here is the sermones de reconciliandis poenitentibus, or a series of three sermons given at Rome and conserved for us as direct preparation for the reception of penance at Rome during the fifth century. This summary is reserved for us in three postulationes by an Archdeacon of the Roman Church, dated by Morin from the end of the fifth to the beginning of the sixth centuries.[1]

As is evident from any history of the practice of penance in the early Church,[2] the penitential rite was separated into three distinct

---

[1] G. Morin, Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti (Rome, 1930)p.723

[2] Cf. as one example among many, C. Vogel, Le Pécheur et la pénitence dans l'Église ancienne (Paris, 1966), pp. 22-80; for further bibliography see the excellent study on the postulations in two parts of F. Bussini, "Intervention de l'Assemblée des fideles au moment de la réconciliation des pénitents, d'après les trois 'postulationes' d'un archidiacre romain du V^{e}-VI^{e} siècle," Révue des Sciences Religieuses, 41 (1967), 28-38; "Intervention de l'Evêque dans la réconciliation des pénitents d'après les trois 'postulationes' d'un archidiare romain du V^{e} - VI^{e} siècle", 42 (1968), 326-338.

times: the sinner gave a more or less detailed confession of his sins to the bishop or priest representative of the bishop; then he was admitted, if it was so deemed necessary by the bishop, to the ordo penitentium where the penitent accomplished the prescribed penance for his sins; and finally, the ceremony of reconciliation usually on Maundy Thursday or even on Good Friday (Ambrose).[3] This latter rite culminated in the intervention by the bishop on behalf of the penitents at the bequest of the archdeacon speaking on behalf of all the people assembled around the bishop, both penitents and non-penitents. This reconciliation by the bishop had the effect of readmitting the penitents to the Eucharist or, as our document puts it, "to the body and blood of the Lord."

It is the latter ceremony or rite of reconciliation which is conserved for us in these three postulationes and as such, are a perfect example of the intervention of the bishop, his power and ministry on behalf of penitents in the fifth century. We shall endeavor to examine closely the process followed by the archdeacon[4] who asks (postulatio) the bishop for the reconciliation of the penitents before

---

[3] E. Dekkers, "La Messe du soir du Jeudi-Saint," Sacris Erudiri, 7 (1956), 123-126; A. Chavasse, "A Rome, le Jeudi-Saint, au VII[e] siecle, d'après un vieil Ordo" Révue d'histoire ecclesiastique, 50 (1955) 21-28.

[4] This function of postulatio on behalf of sinners is also attested to in the Sacramentum Gelasianum, I, 16. (ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Acclesiae anni circuli [Rome, 1960], p.56). Cf. infra, pp. 206-214.

XUM

him, as he speaks to the bishop on their behalf and on behalf of all the people of God present at the rite of reconciliation. The way the archdeacon goes about his task in the three postulationes gives us invaluable insight into the practice of penance at that time, its mode of reconciliation as well as the ministerial power of the bishop in the matter of the forgiveness of sins. The Archdeacon points out to the bishop the tears and groans of not only the penitents but of all the people of God assembled, who plead for the forgiveness and reconciliation of these penitents. The penitents are therefore worthy of reconciliation. Then the archdeacon points out the task and responsbility of the bishop in the reconciliation of the penitents before him. Finally, there is the part of the congregation before the pontiff which also plays an important and effective part in the reconciliation of the penitents. For the faithful non-penitents present also intervene -- in their own way -- on behalf of the faithful penitents in the process of reconciliation.[5]

A. The Sermons

These sermons, therefore, are requests for penance, mercy and reconciliation given by a deacon and addressed to the bishop of Rome. They have been conserved for us in collections of Augustine, who was thought to have given them. But scholars today are agreed that they

---

[5] The Archdeacon speaks of this assembly in I, 7; II, 12-13; III, 4-6 (pp. 361-362).

were not pronounced by him.[6] They are, however, Roman because in them we find various allusions to the pope: beatissimus, sanctus, sede apostolica sublimatus and finally ubi praesedit ille cui dictum est: 'Tibi dabo claves regni caelorum.'[7]

G. Morin estimates these sermons to be from about the end of the fifth century.[8] We can certainly place them before the time of Gregory the Great (590-604).

The themes contained in these sermons are certainly Augustinian in origin as we can see from what follows.

The penitent punishes himself and thus escapes from the divine punishment which was a favorite Augustinian theme.[9] See the following parts of the sermons:

> I. 2: Noluit enim deus misericors mortem peccatoris quantum ut revertatur et vivat. Et rursus noluit justus judex impunitum esse peccatum. Punit ergo se paenitens et dei praevenit manum, ut subventura veniat quae damnatura veniebat. Qui conterendo spiritum suum in luctu et gemitu, dolore ac lacrimis de se peccatorum suorum exigit poenas, deo judici quod exigat non relinquit et patri quod donet opponit.[10] II.2: Per corpus

---

[6] Cf. The sermons as contained in Vol. IX of the Corpus Christianorum (Turnholti, 1957), pp. 349-363. F. Heylen, in his introduction to the sermones, agrees with G. Morin (Sancti Augustini Sermones post Maurinos reperti [Romae, 1930], p. 723), and A. Dold in "Eine Ausprache aus dem Christlichem Altertum gehalten während der Missa 'ad reconciliandum poenitentes' am Grundonnerstag, "in Bibel und Liturgie, 20 (1953), 172-183, that the sermones are not from St. Augustine (p. 351).

[7] Cf. I, 70; II, 2; III, 3, 31-32.

[8] Op. Cit., pp. 715-720.

[9] Cf. Sermo 351,4, 9 (P.L. 39, C. 1535 FF and Florilegium Patristicum, 38, 23 FF. See also note #14.

[10] CC., p. 355

peccarunt, corpus affligunt: de sua malitia exegerunt poenam, de dei misericordia exigunt veniam; ut illum propitientur irascuntur sibi, et ne puniat ille, se puniunt.[11] II,8: Paenitentia est ergo peccatorum vindex, ut vindicata vitetur, et a poenis liberans poena judicium praeveniens judicem, et cruciatus propitians cognitorum, praenuntians adversus hominem quod fiat pro homine, et reum ne damnetur accusans.[12] III.7: Paenitentia est quae dolorem doloribus eripit et evadit vindicando vindictam. In se enim quisque vindicat qui seipsum cruciat paenitendo ut non jam vindicem judicem sed patrem receptorem deum reperire mereatur.[13]

Thus in this way of viewing the matter it is not the priest who imposes the penance nor the priest who binds the sinner, but rather it is the penitent himself who does this.[14]

---

[11] CC. p. 358

[12] CC. p. 359

[13] CC. p. 362

[14] Cf. St. Augustine, Enarrationes in Psalmos, S. I, 13 (Corpus Christianorum vol. XXXIX, pp. 739-740) where he puts it in the following way:

> 13. Iniquitas ommis, parua magnaue sit, puniatur necesse est, aut ab ipso homine paenitente, aut a Deo uindicante. Nam et quem paenitet, punit seipsum. Ergo, fratres, puniamus nostra peccata, si quaerimus misericordiam Dei. Non potest Deus misereri omnium operantium iniquitatem quasi blandiens peccatis, aut non eradicans peccata. Prorsus aut punis, aut punit. Vis non puniat? Puni, tu. Nam et allud fecisti quod impunitum esse non possit; sed a te puniatur potius, ut facias quod in illo psalmo scriptum est: Praeueniamus faciem eius in confessione. Quid est: Praeueniamus faciem eius? Antequam ipse adtendat ut puniat, tu praeueni confitendo et puni. Non ille inueniat quod puniat. Quia cum tu punis iniquitatem, facis aequitatem. Et ideo tui miserebitur Deus, quia iam te operantem aequitatem inuenit Deus. Quid est, operantem aequitatem? Quia hoc in te punis quod displicet Deo. Nam non potest impunitum relinqui peccatum, quoniam uerum est: Non miserearis omnium qui operantur iniquitatem.

2. Members of the Assembly

The first aspect which appears clearly in these sermones is that the faithful non-penitents are standing around the elevated throne of the bishop while that of the faithful penitents is one of prostration.[15] The term used to describe the non-penitent faithful is circumstantes or simply stantes.[16] Yet, all are one of the flock of the Lord because they are one body; and consequently when one suffers, all suffer.[17] It is therefore in the name of the whole flock that the archdeacon asks the bishop to act out his ministry of reconciliation for the faithful penitents.[18]

It is clear then that although the jacentes and the stantes form one flock in the matter of reconciliation, they are distinct from the

---

[15] III, 1: "prostrata turba miserorum"; I, 7: "Moveant te pro eis fraterni fletus et circumstantium gemitus, non pro suis sed pro alienis peccatis..."

[16] I, 12 (p. 357); II, 12 (p. 360); III, 5 (p. 362).

[17] I, 7 (p. 356):"quia in uno corpore et sub uno capite patientibus quibusdam membris compatiuntur."

[18] I, 12 (p. 357): "Restat ut ipse jam facias quod pastorali sollicitudine universo gregi debes et confessioni jacentium et maerori stantium et voce deprecantium, ut ipse dominus deus noster faciat quod promisit." This is a fine summary of the position of each section of the assembly: the faithful penitents, the faithful non-penitents, the bishop and God. (Italics mine)

XUM

bishop who occupies a superior position in the Assembly.[19]

Thus we have the position of the assembly: the bishop seated on an elevated place, the archdeacon who asks on behalf of the whole congregation, the faithful penitents who are prostrate and the faithful non-penitents who are standing around the former.

3. The Intervention of the Assembly

As we have already said, the faithful non-penitents intervene with the bishop in a way which is real and as such is an effective part of the reconciliation itself. How do they do this?

They are first of all witnesses of the penitence and the return of the penitents.[20] In reality, this return of the penitents is an exterior manifestation of the interior victory of Christ in their hearts.[21]

The faithful non-penitents are in a true way identified with the faithful penitents for a number of reasons. First of all they both weep and moan for the penitents since the bishop is requested "to be moved by the tears and the moans of all those present."[22] The faithful

---

[19] See the "sedes episcopalis" and the "sede apostolica sublimatus es; Hi jacent lapsu, descende tu affectu" I, 8 (p. 356). We shall deal later with the position and intervention of the bishop.

[20] II, 5 (p. 359): "Pedes cucurrere ad nefas, mutato itinere quo venerit cernimus" The deacon, of course, identifies himself with the congregation here: "cernimus."

[21] II,6 (p.359): "His exterioribus motis interius Christus victor apparet."

[22] I, 7 (p. 356): "Moveant te pro eis fraterni fletus et circumstantium gemitus..."

non-penitents share the tears of those with whom they have not sinned.[23] The agony of soul is shared by both, the penitents for their committed sins, the non-penitents because of the pain of the penitents, for together they are one body.[24] The circumstantes thus fulfill the text of the psalm of bringing a sorrowful and broken spirit to this ceremony on behalf of their fallen brothers.[25] The whole assembly asks and petitions God for the forgiveness and reconciliation of the penitents prostrate here.[26] In other words, the faithful non-penitents take a direct hand in helping, pleading for, and weeping with the fallen brothers. Thus, they are not simply passive witnesses to the penance of their brothers; they actively aid the penitent faithful.[27] The solicitude for the salvation of the fallen brothers takes a concrete and

---

[23] III, 4 (p. 362): "Et nunc istam terram rigant sociasque habent lacrimas eorum cum quibus societatem non habent delictorum."

[24] II, 13 (p. 360): "Consociant illi maerorem suum vulneri istorum ut sibi consocietur sanitas eorum. Illi inclinantur ut erigant, quia isti prosternuntur ut surgant"; I,7 (p. 356): "in uno corpore et sub uno capite patientibus quibusdam membris compatiuntur."

[25] II,3 (p. 358): "Afferunt ei sacrificum spiritum contribulatum, ut cor contritum et humiliatum non spernat, qui superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam." Cf. II, 12 (p. 360).

[26] III, 6 (p. 362): "Omnes petunt ut hi accipiant, omnes pulsant ut his aperiatur; omnes dolent cum isti affliguntur: omnes gaudebunt cum isti sanabuntur."

[27] I,7 (p. 356) where the deacon speaks of a "fraterni fletus" because "in uno corpore et sub uno capite patientibus quibusdam membris compatiuntur."

visible form and intervention.[28] A true compassion is had by one group for the other, in the profoundest sense of the word.[29] Their compassion is a manifestation of their union in the unique body of Christ, since all are members of the body of Christ which is the Church.

At the same time, the faithful non-penitents are not to be identified as such with the faithful penitents. The fact is that the former have not sinned, at least not in the same way as the latter. They beseech the bishop not for their own sins but for the sins of the fallen brothers.[30]

But why is it so important for all the brothers to shed tears for the penitents? The reason is that all of the ancient tradition saw in penance a form of second Baptism which was administered by water.[31] The second Baptism ("the second plank after Baptism," as penance was called by the early Church) had to come about by the water of the pain-filled tears of those who were sorry for their sins.[32] Thus we have a

---

[28] III, 5 (p. 362): "In eius corpore membra sunt ista, alia iacent alia iacentibus adhaerent, alia ut erigantur sternuntur." The word used here ("adhaerent") signifies a deep sense of identification in sorrow or what we would call today "empathy".

[29] III, 5 (p. 362) "Quod enim membrum contineat unitas corporis et non compatiatur alteri membro patienti, condoleat dolenti, consulat periclitanti, subveniat laboranti...ut alter alterius onera portantes impleant legem Christi".

[30] I, 7 (p.356): "non pro suis sed pro alienis peccatis" cf. III, 5 (p. 362): "non utique confitentes, sed utique plangentes."

[31] II, 12 (p. 360): "Multa pro eis sacrificia, tot etiam circumstantium fratrum contribulati spritus offeruntur et pro baptismo, cuius fidem non serverunt, multae funduntur lacrimae proximorum."

[32] For proof, see C. Vogel, "Le péché et la pénitence aperçu sur l'évolution historique de la discipline pénitentielle dans l'Église latine," in Pastorale du Péché (Paris, 1961), pp. 162, 166, 169, 175. See also the Sacramentarium Gelasianum, I. 38 in ed. L.C. Mohlberg, Op. Cit., p. 56. Cf. infra pp. 206-214.

XUM

comparison here between the water of Baptism and the water (tears) of the second Baptism which is penance -- both of which were necessary to extricate the sinner from his sins but in a different way. Yet, the tears are from the whole congregation, not of the penitents alone, for the reasons we have already given above. The tears of the stantes are therefore an active intervention and intercession on their part for the jacentes and an active element in the reconciliation of the penitents.

In what way is this intervention efficacious? One of its direct objects is to solicit the direct intervention of the minister himself. So moved, the tears of the pontiff become part of the tears of the congregation.[33] The whole process of reconciliation is thus clearly outlined for us in this text: that of the assembly, of the minister and of God -- each in its own hierarchical place but all coordinated as one whole leading to the reconciliation of the penitents. The charity of the assembly moves and stirs up the charity which is in the heart of the bishop so that he is moved to intervene for the benefit of the penitents by exercising his ministry.[34] God's action in its turn corresponds to this intervention of the pontiff, which we shall see later in the text. It is the action of God which is all important for which the ministry of the pontiff is only an instrument.

---

[33] I, 7 (p. 356): "Horum tu omnium gemitus adiuva, additis tuis"
II, 13 (p. 360): "Omnium ergo te caritas moveat quae in te honoratius habitat, ut uno interventu et istorum pro suis et illorum pro fratrum delictis preces et fletus exaudiantur a domino communis est gemitus."

[34] Cf. I, 9 (p. 357): "Ministerio."

The pontiff has therefore a distinct role from that of the assembly though intimately connected with it; and it is he who establishes a direct link and relationship between the penitents and God -- all set in action by the tears, groans, (i.e. the charity), of the assembly, which in its turn, sets in motion the charity of the pontiff and his direct relationship between God and the penitents.

It does not suffice, however, for the circumstantes simply to share the sufferings of the penitents but they must come actively to their aid. Why is this so? Because of the law of Christ which obliges each person to carry one another's burdens.[35] Indeed, if we are obligated by Jesus to pray for our enemies, how much more so for our fallen brothers?[36] In this we have the very example of Jesus whom the assembly must follow.[37] We have here all the ingredients of the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ developed by St. Paul in his epistles which gives rise to the solidarity between pontiff, the faithful non-penitents and the faithful penitents.[38] The conclusion here is clear: It is this common membership in the body of Christ which makes the solidarity and responsibility of all the members for

---

[35] III, 5 (p. 362): "ut alter alterius onera portantes impleant legem Christi. Qui peccatum non fecit, peccatores vocavit pro peccantibus oravit, peccata donavit. In eius corpore membra sunt ista, alia jacent, alia jacentibus adhaerent, alia ut erigantur sternuntur."

[36] I, 7 (p. 356): "nam quomodo non debent flere pro fratribus lapsis atque conversis, quos orare Christus docuit etiam inimicis?"

[37] III, 5 (p. 362): "Qui peccatum non fecit, peccatores vocavit, pro peccantibus oravit, peccata donavit."

[38] Ibid., "Quod enim membrum contineat unitas corporis et non compatiatur alteri membro patienti, condoleat dolenti, consulat periclitanti, subveniat laboranti."

one another; and it is this fact which gives the positive element in reconciliation of the penitents by the whole assembly itself.

Yet, it is God who is the source of charity in all of the hearts of the faithful.[39] God acts in and by his Church which is the body of Christ. What is contained in this whole teaching of the three postulationes is that reconciliation with God (by the penitent) can only come - with and by the penitent's reconciliation with the Church. Yet, each in the Church has his part to play. The ministry of the pontiff is decisive because he alone has the power of the keys.[40] But the part of the assembly is important as well, since it is their charity which moves the charity of the pontiff to exercise his ministry; therefore the assembly is contributory to his intervention.

This pleading for penitents was done in a particular way during Lent when all the Church gathered to pray for the ordo penitentium. Leo the Great emphasized this point in many of his sermons during Lent.[41] It is the whole Church which is penitential and in which the penitentes can make their way back to God. It is God who acts in and through the Church, that is, through each of the co-ordinated stages and hierarchical levels of the Church itself: the deacon, the whole assembly and the bishop who together make up the Church, the one body of Christ. Reconciliation is brought about in and by the Church, and consequently with

---

39 II, 13 (p. 360): "In omnibus deus operatur quoniam deus charitas est..."

40 I, 5 (p. 356): "Claves habens, aperi pulsantibus."

41 Cf. Sermo XLV (P.L. 54, C. 288). Translation in Léon le Grand, Sermons, II (Paris, 1957), pp. 60-61.

and by God.[42]

4. The Intervention of the Pontiff

There remains, however, the whole attitude of the postulationes with regard to the efficacy and work of the ministry of the bishop or pontiff which must now be further investigated. We have already seen that the physical position of the pontiff in the assembly was elevated and the whole of the archdeacon's pleading is directed to move him to exercise his ministry.[43] The circumstantes are standing around the pontiff who therefore occupies the position of the greatest importance in the whole process of reconciliation.[44] The reason for this is clear in the text: this pontiff occupies the sedes apostolica, in whose succession the pontiff sits and whose power of the keys he also has.[45] In other words, the pontiff as successor of St. Peter, has the same power over sin and its forgiveness as was given to St. Peter by Christ.[46] The pontiff has the direct power to forgive which he is here entreated

---

[42] III, 3 (p. 361): "Adsunt ergo isti in templo Dei est in ecclesia dei, de longiquo protrati desiderantes petere reconciliari deo in corpore et sanguine Jesu Christi."

[43] I, 8 (p. 356): "Ammoto igne pietatis ad propitiandum deum flagra pro miseris, misericordia plenum pectus in aram caritatis impone. Sede apostolica sublimatus es. Hi iacent lapsu, descende tu affectu"

[44] I, 6 (p. 356); I, 7 (P. 356); II, 12 (p. 360).

[45] III, 3 (p. 361): "Et si hoc de omnibus bonis fidelibus verum est, quanto magis de te qui regendis fidelibus praesides, in eo praesertim loco ubi praesedit ille cui dictum est: 'tibi dabo claves regni caelorum.'"

[46] This same theme was taken up by Leo in many of his Sermons. Cf. Sermo II, 2 (P.L. 54, C. 144); Sermo LXXXII, 1 (P.L. 56, C. 423) and Ep. XIV, 8 (P.L. 56, C. 674). We have seen this above, supra, pp. 96-118.

to work for the benefit of the penitents before him.[47] This power to forgive sin implies a double relationship to God and to the sinner.

The pontiff is the minister of God in whom the presence and Spirit of God inhabit since it is God who, in reality, forgives.[48] It is God who directly intervenes through the ministry of the bishop.[49] The pardon of God is the very source of reconciliation of the sinner while the pontiff always remains nothing but his instrument. Yet, the relationship between God and the pontiff is not gratuitous or accidental but stable and permanent, since God "inhabits" the pontiff because he succeeds the blessed Peter to whom Jesus promised the forgiveness of sins. This is emphasized by the per in the text.[50] In the eyes of the archdeacon and those for whom he speaks, this stable relationship between God and the pontiff is presupposed and emphasized, hence it is the pontiff who is entreated to exercise his ministry, for without it, the forgiveness of sin will not take place in the penitents, and they will not be reconciled. It is in this respect that the pontiff is distinguished from the other faithful of the assembly, even though he is not

---

47 II, 4 (p. 358): "Habes enim claves quibus quicquid in terra solveris, soluatur in caelo."

48 II, (p.360): "Insiste in eis apud eum qui habitat in te ut propitus fiat omnibus inquitatibus eorum, sanet omnes lanuores eorum..."

49 II, 1 (p. 358): "Moveant te lacrimae paenitentium, sancte papa, et indulgentiam desiderantium per te ab illo qui habitat in te. Ad illum quippe veniunt et prosternuntur ei et plorant ante dominum qui eos fecit, ut delens quod fecerunt et reficiat ipse quod fecit."

50 ibid., "per te."

isolated from them. This latter aspect is emphasized as well by the statement of the archdeacon that God also inhabits the assembly; for what is true of all of the faithful is above all true of the pontiff. (We saw this earlier when emphasizing that the same charity of God inhabited the assembly as well as the pontiff.)[51] The pontiff is, therefore, one of the faithful who has received the gift of ministry in a stable relationship with God for the forgiveness of sins with regard to the faithful.[52]

Yet, the relationship of the pontiff is not only with God; it is also with the faithful. The very form of the archdeacon's entreaty shows this clearly.[53] It is God who gave such power to the pontiff as the text makes plain (hanc tibi turba miserum); and it is God who has confided this miserable group of people to the pontiff to be its healer and pastor. God alone is the sanctus sanctorum and the pastor pastorum who gives this flock over to the pontiff to serve it by his ministry (non ministrari sed ministrare). This mercy inhabits the heart of the pontiff so that he can have mercy on the turba miserum who are before

---

51 II, 13 (p. 360): "Omnium ergo te charitas moveat quae in te honoratius habitat, ut tuo, interventu et istorum pro suis et illorum pro fratrum delictis preces et fletus exaudiantur a domino."

52 III, 3 (p. 361): "Nos, inquit apostulus , templa dei vivi sumus. Et si hoc de gendis fidelibus praesides, in eo praesertim loco ubi praesedit ille cui dictum est: tibi dabo claves regni caelorum".

53 III, 1 (pp. 360-361): "Hanc tibi, beatissime papa, gloriosam redemptam tamquam speculam pastoralem sanctus sanctorum et pastor pastorum, redemptor captivorum, inventor peritorum, sanator aegrotorum de sua caelesti sede concessit, non alta sapienti, sed sano languidis paterna veritate servienti, non a quibus orari te delecteris sed pro quibus orans exaudiri merearis."

him.

In this way, the pontiff can intervene with efficacy on behalf of the penitents and the archdeacon emphasizes this by the two words: interventus and intercessio.[54] In the first text (intercessio), the relationship goes from the penitents to God, while in the second (interventus) the relationship goes from God to the penitents. Thus the pontiff goes before God to intervene with him on behalf of the penitents in the name of God himself. These two dimensions are worthy of further consideration.

With regard to God, the pontiff implores for the penitents. The text says that the pontiff orari pro se desiderans orat prostrata turba miserorum.[55] The pontiff takes the prayer of the penitents and offers them to God. This is said explicitly in the text.[56] The pontiff offers God the prayer of the penitents.

This offering of the prayer of the penitents to God by the pontiff is done with great emotion and affectivity. The pontiff's heart is full of charity, moved as it is by the cries and prayers of the assembly.[57] The pontiff engages his own interior self in imploring the mercy and grace of God for the penitents[58] and he asks that their

---

[54] I, 6 (p. 356): "nec fugiunt timore sed redeunt et per intercessionem tuam domino suo reddi desiderant." Cf. II, 13 (p. 360).

[55] III, 1 (p. 360).

[56] III, 2 (p. 361): "Pro quibus nunc ad te sonat os meum pro his quibus cor tuum clamat ad dominum."

[57] II, 13 (p. 360): "Omnium ergo te charitas moveat quae in te honoratius habitat."

[58] I, 8 (p. 356).

prayer be heard by God. His prayer, however, by reason of his ministry, has more efficacy than that of the other faithful.[59] What the pontiff asks for, of course, is the pardon of God for the penitents before him.[60] Thus the pontiff offers himself; but he also offers the penitents themselves.[61] The offering of the pontiff is not simply an offering but an efficacious offering which results in the reconciliation of the penitents with God.[62]

The penitents, on the other hand, miserable in their sins, address themselves to him who is "the holy abode of mercy".[63] They seek his active intervention on their behalf among them.[64] This is also because of their need and the ability of the pontiff to fulfill that need of reconciliation with God. Penance itself beckons to forgiveness and if the penitents address themselves to the pontiff, they do so because he has the power to restore them and to heal them.[65] That is why the

---

[59] III, 9 (p. 363): "Auribus percipit dominum lacrimas vestras, habitans in eius praesidentis corde pastoris, cuius mereantur preces fusae pro nobis, quidquid minus valetis in vestris."

[60] II, 11 (p. 360): "Insiste in eis apud eum qui habitat in te ut proptius fiat omnibus iniquitatibus eorum, sanet omnes languores eorum, redimat de corruptione vitam eorum, erigat elisos, soluat compeditos, iustificet iniustos."

[61] Cf. I, 8 (p. 357); III, 4 (p. 361).

[62] I, 6 (p. 356): "nec fugiunt timore sed redeunt et per intercessionem tuam domino suo reddi desiderant."

[63] II, 1 (p. 358); "ab illo qui habitat in te."

[64] I, 4 (p. 355): "ecce non solum in conspectu domini sui sed etiam ante oculos tuos prosternuntur."

[65] I, 5(p. 356): "Gratia plenus es, praesta paenitentibus lumine splendens, refulge quaerentibus; claves habens, aperi pulsantibus."

penitents show him their wounds and consciences.[66]

The intervention of the pontiff takes various stages. The deacon first of all recalls what the pontiff has done for the penitents even before this rite of reconciliation. He called them and looked for them while they were as yet sinners.[67] As they entered the role of penance, it is he who excommunicated them for reasons not punitive but medicinal.[68]

Now the result of his work is before the pontiff. Their penitential conduct has shown the fruit of his labors and now awaits the ministry of the keys to be completed. If the penitents have truly been converted, they can now be reconciled.[69] Yet, it is God alone who pardons, using the ministry of the pontiff for this end.[70] In reality, it was God who called the sinners to penance.[71]

---

[66] I, 5 (p. 356): "ostendentes tibi vulnera sua, et ferinis morsibus cruentas conscientias renudantes intende et suscipe; jam plagas suas non differunt prodere; noli differe diligentiam medicinae"

[67] I, 8 (p. 356): "Offer reconciliandos redeuntes, quos revocabas errantes. Ora pro inventis, quos perditos inquirebas."

[68] II, 6 (p. 359): "Dolor iste medicinalis est, non poenalis."
II, 12 (p. 360): "Non enim frusta excommunicando humilitatis fossam circumdedisti ac sordes lugubres sed tamen fertiles tanquam cophinum stercoris adhibuisti.

[69] II, 4 (p. 358): "Habes claves, quibus quicquid in terra solueris, soluatur in caelo."

[70] II, 6 (p. 359):"his exteriorbus motibus interius Christus victor apparet." See also II, 1 where we read: "Moveat te lacrimae... indulgentiam desiderantium per te ab illo qui habitat in te"

[71] I, 4 (pp. 355-356); "...quos patientia illius ad poenitentiam vocabat."

This theology of penance was present in many of the texts of this same period: Leo, Ambrose and the later Gelasian Sacramentary. Thus it is the bishop who intercedes for the penitent as can be seen in the sermons of Leo: etiam sacerdos qui precator accedat.[72] This theme is contained in the sermones:

> I, 4-5: Proinde, venerabilis papa, ecce non solum in conspectu domini dei sui, sed etiam ante tuos oculos prosternuntur, quos patientia illius ad patientiam vocabat. Nec aversi thesaurisant iram, sed conversi poscunt misericordiam. Ecce jam petunt, quaerunt pulsant. Gratia plenus es, praesta paenitentibus; lumine spledens, refulge quaerentibus; claves habens, aperi pulsantibus. Moveat in te pastoralia viscera oves sanguine agni redemptae et oculto illius adjutoria a luporum dentibus erutae; ostendentes tibi, vulnera sua, et ferinis morsibus cruentas conscientias renundantes, intende et suscipe; jam plagas suas non differunt prodere; noli differre diligentiam medicinae.73

The archdeacon asks that the prayers and moanings of the penitents might move the pontiff. This is similar to the theology of Ambrose. The difference between Ambrose and our present text is that for Ambrose it is Christ who is to be moved by the prayers whereas here it is the pontiff.[74] Thus in our present text we read:

> II, 1: Moveant te lacrimae paenitentium, sancte papa, et indulgentiam desiderantium per te ab illo qui habitat in te.75
> II, 13: Omnium ergo te caritas moveat quae in te honoratius habitat, ut tuo interventu et istorum pro suis et illorum pro fratrum delictis preces et fletus exaudiatur a domino...76

---

[72] Ep. 168, 2 (P.L. 54, C. 1431): "Sufficit enim illa confessio quae Deo offertur, tum etiam sacerdoti, qui pro delictis poenitentium precatur accedit."

[73] CC., pp. 355-356.

[74] Cf. De Paenit., I, 8, 37 (CSEL, 73, p. 137).

[75] CC., p. 358

[76] CC., p. 360

In our present text, it is in fact the Pope whom the archdeacon beseeches and tries to move:

> III, 1, 2: Apostolicum pectus venerabilis sacerdotia, sanctum misericordiae domicilium, orari pro se desiderans orat prostrata turba miserorum...Intercessionem pro his apud te sollemniter facio loquens volenti, non extorquens neganti; quos commendo sermone, praevenis pietate; pro quibus nunc ad te sonat os meum, pro his quibus cor tuum clamat ad dominum.[77]
> III, 9: Bono animo estote supplices dei; recreamini et consolamini, firmate fidem, erigite spem, accendite caritatem. Donabit vobis peccata qui mortem suam nobis donavit sine peccato, non permettet ut pereatis qui mori voluit ut vivatis...Auribus percipit dominus lacrimas vestras, habitans in eius praesidentis corde pastoris, cujus mereantur preces fusae pro vobis, quidquid minus in vestris.[78]

5. The Hierarchical Order of Penance

What we see throughout these three penitential sermons is a very hierarchical vision of penance; the archdeacon intercedes for penitents before the pope in order that the pope might intercede for them before God in order that God might unbind them in heaven. Here the intervention of the Church precedes the reconciliation with God:

> I, 12: Persolvi ergo officium meum qualicumque sermone, etsi vix digno tuis paternis auribus, serviendo tamen istorum fraternis vulneribus. Restat ut ipse jam facias quod pastorali sollicitudine universo gregi debes et confessioni jacentium et maerori stantium et voci deprecantium, ut ipse dominus deus noster faciat quod promisit. Accipiat pro sacrificio suo contribulatum spiritum istorum, cor eorum contritum et humilitatum non spernat. Gementes suppliciter exaudiat misericorditer in terra solvat in coelo.[79]

---

[77] CC.,pp. 360-361.

[78] CC., p. 363.

[79] CC., pp. 357-358.

Finally, in the last analysis, we see that it is with God that the penitent is reconciled. The same idea is present in the following text:

> III, 3: Adsunt ergo isti templo dei, hoc est ecclesia dei, de longiquo prostrati desiderantes petere reconciliari deo in corpore et sanguine Jesu Christi.[80]

It is the bishop who offers repentance to God; he offers God the penitents as a sacrifice of penance:

> I, 8: Offer reconciliandos redeuntes, quos revocabas errantes. Ora pro inventis, quos perditos inquirebas[81]
> III, 4: Afferunt ei sacrificia, non adipem arietum, nec carnes taurorum, nec multitudines caprorum pinguium, animae suae, sed spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, quod non spernit. Hoc impone, sacerdos bone, pro eis in ara mentis tuae, quam superna flamma sanctae dilectionis accendit, et da pro illis domino ordorem suavitatis de visceribus caritatis.[82]
>
> The sermones repeat this theme very often.[83]

This episcopal intercession has a greater merit than that of the faithful in general, a merit one can compare with that of the paternal love of God:

> I, 7: Moveant te pro eis fraterni fletus et circumstantium gemitus, non pro suis sed pro alienis peccatis, nec penitus alienus, quia in uno corpore et sub uno capite patientibus quibusdam memoris compatiuntur. In spiritu enim lenitatis intendunt ne et ipsi temptentur, nam quomodo non debent flere pro fratribus lapsis atque

---

[80] CC., pp. 360-361.

[81] CC., pp. 356-357.

[82] CC., pp. 361-361.

[83] Cf. note #22 and I, 12. There is another view or interpretation of the "sacrificial" role of the priest present in Gregory the Great, Homilia in Ezechielem, L. II, hom. 10, 13 (P.L. 76, C.1423-1424).

> conversis, quos orare Christus docuit etiam pro inimicis? Horum tu omnium gemitus adjuva, additis tuis; et merita tua longe majora, tamquam canos mentis tuae prosterne pro filiis tuis ante faciem dei tui.[84]

This idea of the proper merits of the pope is not found in Leo. Here, it is a question of a true and personal holiness which is greater and not merely a functional dignity. God inhabits more in the heart of the bishop than in the hearts of the faithful.[85] Thus we can read in the text itself:

> III, 3: Nos, inquit apostolus, templa dei vivi sumus. Et si hoc de omnibus fidelibus verum est, quanto magis de te qui regendis fidelibus praesedit ille cui dictum est: tibi dabo claves regni coelorum.[86]

The holiness in the faithful is even greater in the pope. This holiness is not one of another kind or order, but the same holiness, only greater.

Therefore, it is a question here in these sermons of a prayer of intercession, hierarchically constitued, where the prayer of the bishop has a greater merit than that of the faithful but where their prayer also has an efficacy in the penitential process. This episcopal intercession is, however, intimately joined with that of the people, which seems at one time addressed to the bishop and at other times to God:

> II, 12: Gratulaberis in eis de fructu laboris tui et de sua intercessione laetaberis. Multa pro eis sacrificia, tot etiam circumstantium fratrum contribulati spiritus offeruntur et pro baptismo cujus fidem non servaverunt, multae funduntur lacrimae proximorum.[87]

---

[84] CC., p. 356

[85] Cf. II,1; II,13; III,9; III,13.

[86] CC., p. 361

[87] CC., p. 360.

XUM

III,6: Omnes petunt ut hi accipant, omnes pulsant ut his aperiatur; omnes dolent cum isti affliguntur; omnes gaudebunt dum isti sanabuntur.[88]

6. Some Comparisons with other Sources

A. The Solemn Rite of Reconciliation of the Gelasian Sacramentary.[89]

There is some dispute over the place where this rite of reconciliation took place.[90] For our purposes here, this question is irrelevant.

We can distinguish three parts in the Gelasian Sacramentary itself:

- -the postulatio of the deacon to the bishop
- -the sermon of the bishop to the penitents
- -the sacerdotal supplication of the bishop

The whole rite is redacted for the penitent in the singular. The text therefore is not as ancient as the one which we have already seen.

In the postulatio of the Gelasian Sacramentary, the deacon asks the bishop to reconcile the penitent with God by the merits of his prayer:

> Quo ita supplicanti et misericordiam dei afflicto corde poscenti, redintegra in eo apostolicae pontifex, quicquid diabulo scindente corruptum est, et orationum tuarum patrocinantibus meritis per divinae reconciliationis gratiam fac hominem proximum dei, ut qui

---

88 CC., p. 362

89 A. Chavasse holds that the Gelasian Sacramentary gives us substantially the rite of solemn reconciliation which was held at Rome on Maundy Thursday in the seventh century, cf. art. cit., pp. 22-26 in note #3; C. Vogel, however, sees it as the solemn reconciliation in Gaul, cf. op. cit., pp. 32-40.

90 The rite itself and our citations are taken from L.C. Mohlberg, Liber sacramentorum Romanae Acclesiae ordinis anni circuli (Sacramentarium Gelasianum) in the series Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, series maior: fontes IV (Romae, 1960), nos. 352-359.

antea in suis perversitatibus displicebat, nunc placere se domino in regione vivorum cum devicto mortis suae auctore gratuletur; per dominum.[91]

The sacerdotal prayer properly speaking is preceded by a short prayer in which the bishop asks God for the efficacy of his ministerial intercession, that is, for the efficacy of his own prayer:

Adesto, domine, supplicationibus nostris, et me qui etiam misericordiam tuam primus indigeo, clementer exaudi ut quem non electio meriti sed dono gratiae tuae constituisti operis hujus ministrum: da fiduciam tui muneris exequendi et ipse in nostro ministerio quod tuae pietatis est operare: per.[92]

Thus the mercy of God is opposed to the lack of merit of the bishop. In the sacerdotal prayer itself, the bishop asks: moveat pietatem tuam huius famuli tui lacrimosa suspira. That is, it is God who is to be moved as opposed to that of the Sermones cited above, in which it is the pontiff or the pope who is to be moved.

In these texts of the Gelasian Sacramentary, the word meritum is often found. What is the meaning of the word here? There are two possible meanings:

1. Merit is what one does of good and is worthy of a reward. It is also the spiritual value of our acts in the sight of God. Finally, it also means the dignity of life.

2. But dignity also signifies order (ordo) or rank (secundi meriti munus) without signifying a personal holiness.[93] The word is

---

91 Ibid., no. 354

92 Ibid., no. 356.

93 Cf. B. Botte, "secundi meriti munus," Questions Liturgiques,38 (1936) pp. 84-88.

so employed by many authors.[94]

Magnum meritum, therefore, signifies a high function and one arrives at that high function by pursuing the augmenta gratiae, that is, the different ordines which lead to the episcopacy. In the text quoted here from the Gelasian Sacramentary, there seems to be a confusion between the two significations: personal dignity (merita) and functional dignity (meritum).

More important for our objective here is a comparison between the Sacramentarium Gelasianum in the ordo agentibus publicam paenitentiam and its admonitio by the bishop[95] and the postulationes of the Roman

---

[94] Cf. Leo, Ep. II, and 12; Ambrose, Ep. 16 and Jerome, Ep. 146 whose text is as follows:

> Quod autem postea unus electus est, qui caeteris praeponeretur, in schismatis remedium facium est; ne unusquisque ad se trahens Christi Ecclesiam rumperet. Nam et Alexandriae a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium Episcopos, Presbyteri semper unum ex se eclectium, in excelsiori gradu collocatum, Episcopum nominabant: quomodo si exercitus Imperatorem faciat: aut Diaconi eligant de se, quem industrium noverint, et Archidiaconum vocent. Quid enim facit excepta (d) ordinatione Episcopus, quod Presbyter non faciat? Nec altera Romanae urbis Ecclesia, altera totius orbis existimanda est. Et Galliae, et Britanniae, et Africa, et Persis, et Oriens, et India, et omnes barbarae nationes, unum Christum adorant, unam observant regulam veritatis. Si auctoritas quaeritur, orbis major est Urbe. Ubicumque fuerit Episcopus, sive Eugubii, sive Constantinopoli, sive Romae, sive Rhegii, sive Alexandriae (e), sive Tanis, ejusdem meriti, ejusdem...est et Sacerdotii. Potentia divitiarum, et paupertatis humilitas, vel sublimoriorem, vel inferiorem Episcopum (f) non facit. Caeterum omnes Apostolorum successores sunt, (P.L. 22, C. 1082-1083).

[95] Cf. Mohlberg, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

archdeacon. The similarities are striking and yet, the Gelesian sacramentary, of later origin, shows some signs of changes in penitential discipline.[96] The practice of the scrutinia for instance, goes back as far as 402 and perhaps even sooner.[97]

At the beginning of Lent, the Sacramentary directs the penitents to be covered with sack cloth and ashes,[98] and prayers were said for their perseverance and final outcome. They were forbidden to partake of the holy Mysteries but most probably were not excluded from the Church itself,[99] only from the liturgical assembly:

> ut in confessione fleuili permanens clementiam tuam caeleriter exoret et sanctis ac sacris altaribus restitutus spei rursus aeternae et caelestis gloriae reformetur." [100]

The following aspects of penance are very similar to the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon:

The penitents are prostrated before the bishop and the Christian assembly: Egreditur paenitens de loco ubi paenitentiam gessit, et in

---

[96] The Sacramentarium dates from the middle of the eighth century, cf. Mohlberg, op. cit., pp. XXVII - XXIX where the traditional authors are mentioned (Petau, Bona, Tommasis, Muratori, Cabrol, Dix, and Duchesne) in defense of this date. But all argue as well that much of the sacramentary goes back to the fifth - sixth centuries, perhaps to Pope Gelasius himself (491-496). This would make at least some of the sacramentary contemporary with the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon.

[97] This is mentioned in the Roman Council of 420 in D. Mansi, Sanctorum Conciliorum Collectio, 3 (1759), 1137.

[98] Mohlberg, op. cit., p. 18

[99] A. Jungmann, Die lateinische Bussriten in ihrer geschichtliche Entwicklung (Innsbruck, 1932), pp. 64-68.

[100] Mohlberg, op. cit., p.18

XUM

gremito praesentatur aeclesiae prostrato omni corpore in terra.[101]

The deacon acts as their advocate before the bishop.[102] He points how they have done hard penance and deserve the mercy of the bishop.[103] The whole Church weeps and does penance for these penitents who have greviously sinned.[104] It is the pontiff who finally gives forgiveness in the name of the Lord in a deprecative form.[105]

These rites of the Gelasian sacramentary take us back to the fifth century in Rome, not only because of the remarkable theological and ritualistic similarities with the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon but because of other indices as well. The ritual of the orationes in quinta feria are very similar to the story of the conversion of Fabiola, a Roman matron, given us by Jerome,[106] written about the year 399. Before Easter, Fabiola came to prostrate herself before the pontiff and the people in the Lateran. The sacerdos had previously put her out of the Church to do penance in a place reserved for penitents (in ordine poenitentium, non ingressa ecclesiam Domini, sed extra castra consedit). Jerome describes the forms of penance she underwent (sparsum crimen, ora lurida, squalidas manus, sordida colla...) The clergy and the people

---

[101] Ibid., p. 56

[102] Ibid.

[103] "Manducavit, sicut scriptum est, panem doloris, lacrimis stratum rigauit, cor suum luctu, corpus adflixit ieiuniis ..." Ibid.

[104] "...sub conspectu ingenuscentis aeclesiae...", Ibid.

[105] "Tibi ergo, domine, supplices praeces tibi fletum cordia effundimus," Ibid.

[106] Cf. Sancti E. Hieronymi epistulae, CSEL, 55 (1912), pp. 40-42 (ed. I Hilberg) and in P.L. 22, 692-693; cf. also E. Göller, art. cit., 235-298.

weep with her and are moved by the sight (episcopo et presbyteris et omni populo conlacrimanti...) The pontiff finally gives the forgiveness of sins as well as her re-introduction into the Church (ut, quam sacerdos, ejecerat, ipse revocaret).

We have almost an identical description of penance by the Greek Church historican Sozomen in the middle of the fifth century, which is very close to the Gelasian Sacramentary as well as to the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon.[107] All is present here: the rigor of penance, the exclusion from the holy mysteries, the prostration, the tears both of the penitents as well as of the bishop, the prayer of forgiveness by the bishop and finally, the dismissal. Penance, according to Sozomen consisted in fasting, abstinance from bathing, etc. to be determined by the bishop. But each penitent is allowed personal freedom on how to carry this out in his own life (privatim, sua sponte). On the appointed day, he is readmitted back into the Church (Ecclesiae populo sociatur).[108]

---

[107] Ecclesiastical History, 7 (P.G. 67, 1459): "there [at home] the place of those who are in penance is conspicuous: they stand with downcast eyes and with the countenance of mourners. But when the divine liturgy is concluded, without taking part in those things which are lawful to the initiated, they throw themselves prostrate on the ground with wailing and lamentation. Facing them with tears in his eyes, the bishop hurries towards them and likewise falls to the ground. And the whole congregation of the Church with loud crying is filled with tears. After this, the bishop rises first and raises those who are prostrate; and after he has prayed in a fitting manner for those who are repentant of their sins, he dismisses them."

[108] Ibid., 7, 16: "then each one by himself willingly spends as much time as the bishop has appointed in exercises of hardship, either in fasting, or in not bathing, or in abstinence from meats, or in other ways which have been prescribed. On the appointed day, having discharged his penalty after the manner of a debt, he is absolved from his sin, and takes part in the assembly with the people. The bishops of the Romans have guarded this procedure from times long past up to our own day." (Eng. Trans. by P.F. Palmer, Sources of Christian Theology.II. Sacraments and Forgiveness [Westminster, Md., 1958], pp. 122-123).

XUM

All of these rites (from Fabiola, Sozomen and the Roman Archdeacon) are contained in the Gelasian Sacramentary. But in the sixth century, the penitential discipline had already changed and that is why we also have herein the reconciliatio paenitentis ad mortem,[109] since there was no private penance.[110] Only public penance existed but in the case of the dying, it was reduced to its least common denominator.[111] Much of this fifth century penance, however, did survive in the Gelasianum Sacramentarium.

B. St. Augustine

In the sermones of the Archdeacon, we have the traditional penitential example given of the resurrection of Lazarus and interpreted in the same way as in Augustine.[112] In the sermons, this example is divided into two parts or actions: Christ takes away the stone and resurrects Lazarus, and the apostles -- the Church -- complete the work of Christ by unbinding the sinner:

> I,9: Lazarum dominus lapidea sepulchri mole coopertum et quatriduano cadavere jam putantem excitavit a mortuis et magna voce produxit e tumulo. At ille, jam quidem vivus sed adhuc funereis vinculis alligatus, nondum consortio viventium reddebatur. Solvite

---

109 Mohlberg, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

110 P. Galtier, l'Eglise et la remission des pechés aux premiers siecles (Paris, 1932) pp. 489-491.

111 See Gregory's letter I, 15 (P.L. 77, 460-461). See also the Gregori I Papae, Registrum Epistolarum (Monumenta Germaniae historica). Epistolarum, 1 (1887), 139, 285, 241, etc. where the Pope never speaks of private confession.

112 Augustine develops this theme in many of his works. cf. Sermo 67, 1, 2 (P.L. 38, C. 434); In Evangelium Joannis, 49, 24 (P.L. 35, C.1757); Sermons for May cited by B. Poschmann in the Florilegium Patristicum, 38, C. 64, note 1.

illum, inquit, et sinite ire, ut divinum beneficium humano ministerio compleretur.[113]

It is the Church who restores the sinner back to the consortium viventium or to the community of the Church:

> II,4: Mali terreni mole, qua in tenebris conscientiae premebantur, voce Christi disrumpta est. Tamquam de sepulchro in hanc lucem confitendo prodeunt, solve illos et sine ire. Habes enim claves, quibus quidquid in terra solueris, solvatur in caelo.[114]
> III,2: Adsunt squalentes gementes, tamquam remota mole duritiae ab occultis suis velut de sepulcro mortis in manifestationem satisfactionis prodeuntes, sicut de Lazaro dominus ait: solve illum et sine ire. Illius quippe magna commoti noluerunt se peccatores defendendo interire, sed reviviscere confitendo, ut de tenebris mortuae conscientiae reddita spei luce procederent. Proinde vincula quidus ligati sunt detrahe, quoniam quae solveris in terra soluta erunt in coelo.[115]
> III,10: Redde illis epulas vituli saginati; eximantur animae eorum de morte, oculi eorum a lacrimis, pedes eorum a lapsu, ut placeant in conspectu domini in regione viventium.[116]

The function of the ministry and that of the work of God is seen in the comparison with the gospel story of the resurrection of Lazarus, which is contained in each of the three postulationes (I, 9; II, 4; III, 2). This comparison permits us to distinguish the role of Christ and that of his disciples in the narration of the resurrection of Lazarus.

--The word of Christ raises Lazarus from the dead, just asChrist gave his life to the sinner.[117]

--Just as the disciples had to take away the bands of cloth so

---

[113] CC., p. 357

[114] CC., p. 358

[115] CC., p. 361

[116] CC., p. 363

[117] I, 10 (p. 357): "Iam dei virtute justificati de tenebris suis confitendo procedunt, sed ad huc reatus obligatione involutia sanctorum societas seiuncti sunt."

that Lazarus could walk again, so too the pontiff must untie those who have already been vivificati by the work of God but remain as yet bound.[118]

Thus we see the absolute primacy of the work of God in the forgiveness of sins; the work of the minister is truly only ministerial or instrumental.[119] There can be no confusion between the role of Christ and the role of the Church in the reconciliation of penitents, for the second completes the first.

Thus the penitents are reconciled with both the Church and with God. The act of reconciliation was completed not only with the imposition of hands, but above all by the participation of penitents in the Eucharist, the culmination and perfection of the penitential rite of the early Church. To eat the body and blood of Christ with the whole ecclesial body was to be reconciled with both God and the Church.[120]

The archdeacon even asks the pontiff to model his action on that of the whole Trinity in its work for the salvation of man: the Father who pardons, the Son who is servant and the Spirit who prays.[121] Yet, it is the heart of the pontiff which is the place of habitation of the love and mercy of God and it is there that the divine action for sinners and penitents

---

118 Ibid.

119 I,9 (p. 357): "Solvite illum, inquit, et sinite ire, ut divinum beneficium humano ministerio compleretur"

120 III, 3 (p. 361): "...prostrati desiderantes petere reconciliari deo in corpore et sanguine Jesu Christi"

121 I, 8 (pp. 356-357).

takes place,[122] stirred up and aided in this work by the whole assembly.

7. PENANCE IN THE ROMAN ARCHDEACON: SOME CONCLUSIONS

As is evident from any history of the practice of penance in the early Church, the penitential rite was separated into three distinct chronological time lapses: the sinner gave a detailed confession of his sins to the bishop or priest representative of the bishop; then he was admitted, if it was so deemed necessary by the bishop, to the ordo penitentium where the penitent accomplished the prescribed penance for his sins; and finally, the ceremony of reconciliation usually on Maundy Thursday or even on Good Friday (Ambrose). The postulationes culminated in the intervention by the bishop on behalf of the penitents at the request of the archdeacon speaking for all the people assembled around the bishop, both penitents and non-penitents. This reconciliation by the bishop had the effect of readmitting the penitents to the Eucharist or, as our document puts it, "to the body and blood of the Lord."

It is the latter ceremony or rite of reconciliation which is conserved for us in these three postulationes and as such is a perfect example of the intervention of the bishop, his power and ministry on

---

122 Cf. III, 9 (p. 363).

behalf of penitents in the fifth century. The way the archdeacon goes about his task in the three postulationes gives us invaluable insight into the practice of penance at the end of the fifth century, its mode of reconciliation as well as the ministerial power of the bishop in the matter of the forgiveness of sins.

Although we have no details of the ceremony of reconciliation itself in the three sermons, the eighth-century Gelasian Sacramentary, based on earlier Roman practice, states that the penitent was reconciled at the close of the synaxis or Mass of the Catechumens, after which he was privileged to remain for the Eucharistic meal and to receive Holy Communion. In the Gelasian Sacramentary, the prayers for reconciling penitents are all deprecatory in character, and although no imposition of hands occurs in the rubrics, there is evidence from Innocent I (415) that this was the practice at Rome. We can therefore presume with some degree of probability that this was the case with the Roman Archdeacon.

What is very clear in the Roman Archdeacon is the fact that, although the whole community has a role to play in the reconciliation of sinners, it is the bishop alone who has the power to forgive sins and to reconcile penitents to God Himself (interventus, intercessio). The whole tenor of the sermons is to move the mercy of the bishop so that the bishop in his own turn might exercise the power to forgive sins given to him as a ministerium. As was the case with Ambrose and Leo, the theology of apostolic succession and of the power to forgive sin in the name of God given to the original apostles and continued in their successors, is here present. In this sense, there is a common understanding of "orders" in each of the three authors whom we have studied.

XUM

There are, however, some differences of nuance. Whereas Leo stressed the importance of the priest and his divine power to forgive sins, the Roman Archdeacon is in agreement with Ambrose in also stressing the work and importance of the whole community in the forgiveness of sins. The communitarian dimension of penance is given great emphasis in these sermons. Unfortunately, this aspect will become more faint in the later history of penance. We can already see this in the Gelasian Sacramentary where the ceremony becomes much more ritualized and the role of the congregation is much less than in the sermons of the Roman Archdeacon.

Once again, the reconciliation of penitents is in relation to the Eucharist (in corpore et sanguine Jesu). As was the case with Ambrose and Leo, the actual ceremony of reconciliation is not described for us. As we have seen, the ceremony is kept for us by the Gelasian Sacramentary but this is of later origin and might not contain the complete ceremony of the fifth century Rome. The witness of Sozomen (450) says that "on the appointed day, having discharged his penalty after the manner of a debt, he (the penitent) is absolved from his sin, and takes part in the assembly with the people". Yet, even here we are not sure which was the reconciliation. Was it a special ceremony or was it the actual reception of the Eucharist? This is not certain from the sermones of the Roman Archdeacon. Reconciliation as Eucharistic reception may, however, be plausibly defended as at least a distinct possibility.

XUM

EPILOGUE

The critical study of this period of penance in Ambrose, Leo I and the Roman archdeacon has led us to some general theological and liturgical conclusions which we can now state briefly.

1. It is clear in each of these authors that the Church in the person of the pontifex has the instrumental but real power from God to reconcile serious sinners to God. By this penitential power, the sinner is truly forgiven his sins and reconciled to God. This has both a negative as well as a positive effect on the sinner. Penance was not a form of magic which priests exercised as they chose: they had to follow the will of the Lord. Moreover, the sinner had to do serious and sometimes arduous penance. Penance was above all a grace of God but it was also the work of the pontifex, the penitent, indeed of the whole Church. This basic theology pervades all three authors.

2. This theology of penance adds nothing to our knowledge of public penance of the third and fourth centuries. In other words, penance, as developed in these authors of the fifth century, is a faithful continuity of the practice of public penance of the earlier Church in the West. What becomes more clear, especially in the Roman archdeacon, is the responsibility of the whole Church to pray for all of the penitents. This communio sanctorum, of course, is present in all three authors but is more explicitly developed in the archdeacon.

3. We can already begin to see the grave pastoral problem of public penance in this century. Ambrose himself alludes to it when he says to the young that they ought to defer penance until they were older when their passions shall have subsided. The unicity of penance had created such a problem that in fact Christians postponed penance

XUM

until the end of their lives. This was a pastoral disaster and cried out for a remedy. Moreover, in spire of the fact that from a theological point of view, Ambrose and Leo stressed the mercy of God and the power of the Church to forgive every and any sin, the unicity of penance denied this teaching from a practical point of view. Theology becomes dead letter without its practice and effect on the real lives of the faithful. Later centuries had to bring remedy to this rather disastrous state of pastoral affairs.

4. The ecclesial dimension of penance was not stressed as such in the public penance of this period but it is implicitly present throughout each of the three authors studied. We can see this clearly from the fact that penitents were reconciled in Ambrose, Leo and the Roman archdeacon on Maundy Thursday. The reason for this was the fact that this was the day of the Eucharistic institution since, as all the Fathers emphasized, Eucharistia facit ecclesiam. The forgiveness of sin was always in function of the Eucharist where the Church is gathered to celebrate the supreme act of salvation, as the archdeacon says, in corpore et sanguine Jesu. Penitents were initially ex-communicated, that is, they were excluded from participation in the Eucharist. It therefore clearly follows that being reconciled to God and participating in the Eucharist, penitents were eo ipso at peace and communion with all the other members of the Church. That is also why the Roman archdeacon strongly develops the notion of the communio sanctorum in his sermons.

5. This intimate relationship and orientation of penance to the Eucharist can have a very beneficial ecumenical effect today. In discussing the notion of sacraments it is well to note this relationship since penance is a sacrament only analogously in reference to baptism

XUM

(penance was called "the second plank after baptism") and the Eucharist (to which penance was essentially oriented). All the other sacraments exist only in relationship to (or, analogous to) the two great sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.

6. The later sacramentaries faithfully reflect this theology of penance in our three authors. Although they are of a much later date, the Gelasian and Leonine sacramentaries faithfully reflect the theological and ecclesial dimensions of penance of a much earlier period, i.e., the theology of Ambrose, Leo and the Roman archdeacon. Indeed, this theology, as we have said, goes back even beyond these authors to the very earliest days of the third and fourth centuries.

7. For the Catholic communcion, a study of this whole period will aid in understanding much of what is happening today in the evolution of the "sacrament of reconciliation" (as many call it today). We have almost totally forgotten or neglected the ecclesial or communal dimension of penance and many Catholics will be confused when we remove the "box" and substitute a more open, fraternal and communal form such as the one restoring these aspects of penance, issued by Rome on February 15, 1974. A study of this period with its theological and ecclesial dimensions of penance, with its emphasis on the role of God, the priest, the penitent and of the whole Church will be of immense importance for practical liturgies and pastoral usage today.

XUM

Appendix I

Penance in Jerome

In the writings of Jerome not all the sources on penance are as yet published in critical form. The Patrologia Latina remains our principal source, though some volumes in the Corpus Christianorum have already appeared. The works of Jerome on penance may be divided into three categories: some of his correspondence, the Dialogus contra Luciferianos and finally, various scriptural works.[1]

(a) Correspondence: Epistola 77 (P.L. 22, C. 475-467). This letter was addressed to Oceanus in which Jerome describes the sin and exemplary penance of Fabiola.

Epistola 122 (P.L. 22. C. 889-900). addressed to Rusticus. This letter is a small De Paenitentia or exhortation to penance addressed to the husband of one of his spiritual daughters who was at the moment in the Holy Land. Herein, Jerome cites many scriptural references but he does not go into canonical penance as such.

Epistola 147 (P.L. 22, C. 1084-1094), addressed to the deacon Sabianus because of his great moral lapses. The letter envisions the problems of the penance of the clergy and it furnishes us with some clarification in this respect.

(b) The Dialogus contra Luciferianos or, as it is known in other Mss. cited by Migne, Altercatio Luciferi et Orthodoxi (P.L. 23, C. 171-202) This dialogue was written about the year 379. It is a polemical work where Jerome treats of the problem of the reception of the Arians

---

[1] An English Translation of some of Jerome's works can be found in W. H. Freemantle, The Principle Works of St. Jerome, Translated (Ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, New York, 1893).

into the Church and particularly the reception of Arian bishops and priests.

(c) The Exegetical Works. These are four in number:

1. Commentarii in Prophetas Minores (CC., Vol. 77, pp. 1-158); In Osee.
2. Ibid. In Ioelum (pp. 159-209).
3. Commentarius in Ecclesiasten (CC., Vol. 72, pp. 248-361).
4. Commentariorum in Epistolam ad Titum (P.L. 26, C. 685-740).

Summary

There are two concerns which tend to preoccupy Jerome in the matter of penance: 1) the question of Novatian and Novatianism and 2) the value of the priestly power or sentence over sin.

As to the first question, Jerome did not seem preoccupied with affirming himself against the power of the Novatian priests but rather against the salvific value of their post-baptismal penance.[2] We shall see more of this a little later.

The value of the sacerdotal sentence is quite explicit in Jerome.

---

[2] In Osee, III, 14 (CC., pp. 152-153): "De hereticis facilis intelligentia est, quod vocentur Samaria, eo quod Dei praecepta servare se jacent, non quod custodissent leges eius: sed quod hoc esse se dicant in similitudinem schismatis Novatianorum, qui et ipse Katharous, id est mundos, se vocant, cum sint omnium immundissimi, negantes paenitentiam, per quam peccata mundantur, juxta illud quod scriptum est:...Lavacrum autem non baptismum vocat, sed omnem paenitudinem quae sordes abluit peccatorum. Pereat igitur huiuscemodi Samaria, quae quicquid loquitur repugnat Deo suo et Clementiam euis vertit in crudelitatem, usque adeo, ut qui viri sunt apud illam et ad malitiae aetatem venere perfectam, spiritali mucrone truncentur.

XUM

In what concerns the exclusion of the sinner, Jerome affirms that the ligatio by the priest on earth necessarily entails the ligatio in heaven and vice versa. Jerome, in other words, retains the condemnatory aspect of the sententia.[3]

Yet, Jerome still distinguishes two different kinds of exclusion:

--The schismatics exclude themselves from the Church. It is because of their bad conscience that they are condemned. (This idea was already to be found in Cyprian in order to justify an expulsion from the Church before the last judgment.)

--In the case of penitential expulsion, it is truly and really the priest who does the excluding or expelling from the Church. The expulsion is presented as the last term or phase of penance.[4] The

---

[3] In Matheum. III, 16 (p. 142): "Istum locum episcopi et presbiteri non intellegentes, aliquid sibi de Pharisaeorum adsumunt supercilio ut vel damnent innocentes vel solvere se noxios arbitrentur, cum apud Deum non sententia sacerdotum sed reorum vita quaeratur. Legimus in Levitico de leprosis habuerint, tunc a sacerdote immundi fiant, non quo sacerdotes leprosos faciant et immundos, sed quo habeant notitiam leprosi et non leprosi et possint discernere qui mundus quive immundus sit. Quomodo ergo ibi leprosum sacerdos immundum facit, sic et hic alligat vel solvit episcopus et presbiter non eos qui insontes sunt vel noxii, sed pro officio suo, cum peccatorum audierat varietates scit qui ligandus sit, qui solvendus."

[4] In Titum III, 4 (P.L. 26, C. 738). After Jerome cites the other appropriate texts of Scripture, he says: "Qui enim semel bisque correptus, audito errore suo, non vult corrigi, errare existiat corrigentem; et econtario se ad pugnas et jurgia verborum parans, eum vult lucrifacere, a quo docetur. Propterea vero a semetipso dicitur esse damnatus: quia fornicator, adultor, homicidia a aeterna vita, per sacerdotes de ecclesia propelluntur. Haeretici autem in semetipsos sententiam ferunt, suo arbitrio de Ecclesia recendentes: quae recessio propriae conscientiae videtur esse damnatio. Inter haeresim et schisma hoc esse arbitrantur, quod haeresis perversum dogma habeat; schisma propter episcopalem dispensorem ab Ecclesia separetur: quod quidem in principio aliqua ex parte intelligi potest. Caeterum nullum schisma non sibi aliquam confingit haeresim, ut recte ab Ecclesia recessisse videatur."

Epistola 77 clearly shows that it is the same priest who both expelled Fabiola and who received her once again back into the Church.[5]

There are four different aspects of penance which can be treated in Jerome:

1. With regard to the Novatians, Jerome does not go out of his way to affirm the power of the priests but rather he questions the salvific value of the post-baptismal penance of these priests. As we have seen in Ambrose,[6] the Novatians were not anti-clerical, that is they did not reject the priesthood but rather kept it strongly. They also had their hierarchy of bishops, priests and deacons, the same as in the Catholic Church. What they denied, according to Jerome, was that penance was of salvific value for grave sins committed after Baptism.[7]

2. Once again, what is the value of the sacerdotal sententia? In speaking of the exclusion of sinners, Jerome affirms that what is bound by the priests on earth is equally bound in heaven.[8] There are two different types of exclusion: for grave sins, the expulsion

---

[5] Ep. 77 (P.L. 22, C. 481). After describing the many sins of Fabiola and after the death of her second husband, she began to do penance for her many sins: "Aperit cunctis vulnus suum, et decolorem in corpore cicatricem flens Roma conspexit. Dissunta habuit latera, nudum caput, clausum os. Non est ingressa Ecclesiam Domini sed extra castra cum Maria sorore Moysi separata consedit (Num 12:15), ut quam Sacerdos ejecerat, ipse revocaret." Also CSEL, 55 (1912),pp. 40-42.

[6] Cf. Supra, pp. 37 - 46.

[7] In Osee, III, 14 (CC., p. 152): "Sed quod hoc esse se dicant in similitudinem schismatis Novatianorum, qui et ipsi Katharous,id est mundos, se vocant, cum sit omnium immundissimi, negantes paenitentiam, per quam peccata mundantur..."

[8] Cfr. note #2

XUM

is pronounced by the priest whereas the heretics and schismatics exclude themselves.[9]

Apropos of Matthew 18:19, Jerome makes some statements which were later to be repeated during the whole Middle Ages in favor of the declarative character of the absolution. We should note at this point that Jerome recognizes herein the power to forgive sins of bishops and priests; but here he is concerned above all by the abuses of this power, that is, by its severity or its facility in individual cases.[10]

Yet, we do see that Jerome considers that it is the priest alone who can accomplish this officium in virtue of his ministry; moreover, it seems that this ministry belongs to the priest in virtue of a gift of the Spirit; it is therefore necessary to have a discernment of the Spirit to which the priest must be faithful.[11]

---

[9] Cf. note #3

[10] In Matheum III (CC.,pp. 163-164): "Familiare est Syris et Maxime Palestinis ad omnem sermonem suum parabolas iungere ut quod per simplix praeceptum teneri ab auditoribus non potest, per similitudinem exemplaque teneatur. Praecepit itaque Petro sub comparatione regis et Domini et servi qui debitor decem milium talentorum a Domino rogans veniam impetraverat, ut ipse quoque dimittat conservis suis minora peccantibus. Si ille enim rex et Dominus servo debitori decem milium talentorum tam facile dimidit, quanto magis servi conservis suis debent minora dimittere? Quod ut manifestius fiat dicamus sub exemplo: Si quis nostrum comiserit adulterium, homocidium, sacrilegium, maiora crimina decem milium talentorum, rogentibus dimittantur si et ipsi dimittant minora peccantibus; si autem ob factum contumeliam simus inplacabiles et propter amarius verbum perpetis habeamus discordias, nonne nobis videmur recte redigendi in carcerem et sub exemplo operis nostri hoc agere ut majorum nobis delictorum venia non relaxetur."

[11] Jerome here must surely be inspired by Origen, De Oratione, 28, 8.

In order to appreciate this declaration of the priest,[12] we must not insist too much on the literary antithesis: non sententia sed vita. The sententia comes from a spiritual power of discernment but it cannot be valid without the life which it judges. In addition, the judgment of the priest is only one aspect of penance. Thus:

(a) Jerome insists on the correptio. The sinner listens to the word of the priest or of the bishop who preaches.[13]

(b) Jerome insists that the sinner must show the doctor his wound; it is the priests (magister et frater) who must propose the therapeutic medicine itself.[14]

(c) In his Dialogus Contra Luciferianos, Jerome says that Lucifer affirmed that the priest must pray for the penitent, and Jerome agrees with this. Thus, according to Lucifer and Jerome, the properly

---

[12] In Matheum, III, (CC., p. 162): "...et poterat contemptoris fratris haec occulta esse responsio vel tacita cogitatio: Si me dispicis, et ego te dispicio, si tu me condemnas, et mea sententia condemnaberis, potestatem tribuit apostolis ut sciant qui a talibus condemnantur, humanam sententiam divina sententia roborari et quodcumque ligatum fuerit in terra ligari pariter et in caelo."

[13] Commen. in Ecclesiasten, XII, 4 (CC., p. 354): "Sequenti autem versiculo, in eo quod ait: Et consurget ad vocem volucris, sive passeris, utemur in tempore, si quando viderimus peccatorem ad vocem episcopi vel presbyteri per paenitentiam consurgentem."

[14] Ibid., X, 11 (CC., p. 338): "Aliter: Si quem serpens diabolus occulte momorderit et nullo conscio, eum peccati veneno infecerit; si tacuerit qui percusses est et non egerit paenitentiam, nec vulnus suum fratri et magistro voluerit confiteri, magister et frater, qui linguam habent ad curandum, facile ei prodesse non potuerunt. Si enim erubescat aegrotus, vulnus medico confitere, quod igorat medicina non curat."

XUM

sacerdotal intervention includes a supplication.[15] Penance is therefore more than a judgment: this sententia of the priest takes place within a whole liturgical action and to take it out of this context -- as was done during the twelfth century --- is to do violence to the thought of Jerome.

3. Jerome attributes the power to absolve, without distinction, to the priest and the bishop.[16] We may suppose that Jerome already was acquainted with the decentralization of penance at Rome under Pope Innocent I.[17]

4. There was the great problem of the reception of heretical bishops back into the Church and, within this context, the whole question of the penance of the clergy. We see this question treated abundantly in the Dialogus.[18] Lucifer of Cagliari was a fanatical anti-Arian who refused to accept converted Arian bishops and priests to the Church.[19]

---

15 Dialogus (P.L. 23, C. 174, 177): "L...Sed et illud quod pro populo peccatore, sacerdos Deum exoret, ac pro sacerdotis nullius sit alius qui deprecetur (Lev, IX)." (174)

"O. Oculus tibi praebet, et caecusis? Quamobrem oro te, ut aut sacrificandi ei licentiam tribuas, cuius baptisma probas; aut reprobes eius baptisma, quem non existimas sacerdotem." (177)

"O. Nam cum in Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto baptizatus homo, templum Domini fiat, cum veteri aede destructa, novum trinitatis delubrum aedificetur, quomodo dicis, sine adventu Spiritus sancti apud Arianos peccata posse dimitti?" (ibid.)

16 Cf. In Matheum III, 19 (p. 142): "Quomodo ergo ibi leprosum sacerdos immundum facit, sic et hic alligat vel solvit episcopus et presbiter non eos qui insontes sunt vel noxis, sed pro officio suo, cum peccatorum audierit varietates scit qui ligandus sit, qui solvendus." Cf. Commentarius Ecclesiasten, XII, 4 (Cf. Note #13)

17 This becomes clear in many of the sacraments other than penance, for example, for Confirmation and the anointing of the sick. Cf. D.B.S. pp. 215-216 (P.L. 20, C. 554-558)

18 Cf. P.L. 23, C. 172-186.

19 See his very work De non parcendo in Deum delinquentibus liber unus which was very severe on the Arians (P.L.13, 935 - 1008).

XUM

Jerome exposes his arguments and gives his responses to them (in parenthesis, it should be said that this polemic is one of the politest that Jerome ever wrote). He exposes objectively the arguments of the Luciferiani without ridiculing them. The Luciferiani demanded the deposition of bishops upon their conversion and entrance into the Catholic Church. They must become laymen and it is in that way that they will do penance. Their arguments were as follows:

1. Matthew 5:13 (light and salt). The sinful bishop who is a heretic cannot pray for sinful people.[20] He cannot any longer be the salt of the earth since he himself has lost his savor: Quomodo potest peccatum dimittere qui ipse peccator est? His intercession would be null and void because he himself is a sinner.

2. A second argument is given: Another cannot pray for the priest or bishop. For the layman, it is the priest who prays but who will pray for the priest (I Kings 2:25 is cited with an accommodating variant)? This underlines the fact that the activity of the priest encompasses an intercession.[21]

3. One cannot receive an Arian into the Church unless he does penance, that is, unless he ceases to be what he once was. But, public penance is incompatible with the honor of the priesthood. The priest who does penance renounces his priesthood; he who denies his grade

---

[20] P.L. 23, C. 173-176.

[21] This was a favorite theme in Leo the Great. Ep. 108, 3 (P.L. 54, C. 1174); Ep. 168, 2 (C. 1431); Ep. 159, 6 (P.L. 54, C. 1333); Ep. 167, prologue (C. 1418); Sermo 3,3 (P.L. 54, C. 12).

cannot be led back into the Church because he does not do penance. Hence, Arian priests ought to be definitively deposed and cannot be taken back as priests. There seems to be an incompatibility between the honor of the priesthood and penance.

Jerome simply responds that the priesthood remains like baptism itself. The layman must not be deposed from the royal priesthood of his baptism just because he does penance. So too, the priest always remains a priest even after he has done penance. Yet, it is not very clear in these texts of Jerome if the priest must do penance in a public way.

Thus the role of the priest in penance was for Jerome similar to that of the other Western Christian authors of his century (Ambrose, Leo, Roman Deacon). He alone had the power to bind and to forgive sin. The aspects of public-private penance are not very well developed in his works. But Jerome's fundamental agreement with the other Western Christians and Orthodox authors of the same period cannot be doubted.

XUM

APPENDIX II

ARCHIDIACONI ROMANI

SERMONES TRES

DE RECONCILIANDIS PAENITENTIBUS[1]

ANNOTATED

[1]Text taken from Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, Vol. LX (Turnholti, 1957), pp. 349-363

DE RECONCILIANDIS PAENITENTIBVS

SERMO I.

1. Inreparabilis esset humana fragilitas morsu peccati tamquam serpentis ore uenenata, nisi paenitentiae medicina succurreret et misericordiam dei confessionis humilitas impetraret.[1] Sicut autem in corpore putredinem uulneris medicinale ferrum exsecat, sic animam iniquitate sauciatam paenitentiae recreat cruciatus, dolor magnorum dolorum amputatur et tribulatio salubris et breuis amaritudo aeternam dulcedinem comparans, poena liberans a poenis et cura mater securitatis. 2. Noluit enim deus misericors mortem peccatoris, quantum ut reuertatur et uiuat. Et rursus noluit iudex iustus impunitum esse peccatum.

---

[1] In the early Church, there were three stages in penance, each separated chronologically in time. The penitent, after a detailed avowal of his sins, was admitted to the ordo penitentium by the bishop. This was in its own turn, followed by the actual accomplishment of the imposed penance for those sins. Finally, there was the ceremony of reconciliation which was characterized by the active intervention of the bishop, his prayer addressed to God for the penitents, the imposition of hands and the readmission of the penitents to the Eucharistic Celebration. The actual reconciliation by the bishop was preceded by the postulatio or request for the penitents by the deacon who asked that the penitent be reconciled. This is the substance of the three sermons here or postulationés by the Roman Archdeacon on behalf of the penitents. The practice is attested to in the later Sacramentarium Gelasianum, I, 16. For a thorough investigation of the primative penance, see C. Vogel, "Le péché et la pénitence, aperçu sur l'évolution historique de la discipline pénitentielle dans l'Eglise latine." in Pastorale du Péché (Paris, 1961), pp. 147-235.

For the part of the assembly in the penitential rite as an active intervention, see I, 58-65; II, 83-97; III, 44-60.

Punit ergo se paenitens et dei praeuenit manum, ut subuentura ueniat quae damnatura ueniebat. Qui conterendo spiritum suum in luctu et gemitu, dolore ac lacrimis de se has peccatorum suorum exigit poenas, deo iudici quod exigat non relinquit et patri quod donet opponit. 3. Hinc iam incipit operari iustitiam, quia se odit primitus peccatorem. Consentit deo dum talis sibi displicet qualis et illi displicet. Et quam parum est quod sibi ipse ingerit tormentorum, sibi irascitur, seque ipsum excruciat paenitendo. Hoc enim quid est et quantum est, si aeternis ignibus comparetur? Tantum tamen ualet in tempore opportuno, antequam ueniat dies irae et reuelationis iusti iudicii dei, si peccator sibi ipsi irascatur, si se ipsum doloribus paenitentiae tamquam in catasta conscientiae confixus excruciet, ut non solum deus talibus nulla indignatione succenseat, sed etiam guadeat amplius de uno paenitente quam de nonaginta nouem iustis quibus non est opus paenitentia. 4. Tanto enim clementius paenitentium reatum relaxat quanto patientius damnationem peccantium differebat. Nam propterea facit solem suum oriri super bonos et malos et pluit super iustos et iniustos, ut dum bonus non deficit miserando, mali erubescant perseuerare peccando. Proinde, uenerabilis papa, ecce non solum in conspectu domini dei sui, sed etiam ante tuos oculos prosternuntur, quos patientia illius ad paenitentiam uocabat. Nec auersi thesaurizant iram, sed conuersi poscunt misericordiam. 5. Ecce iam petunt, quaerunt, pulsant. Gratia plenus es, praesta paenitentibus; lumine splendens, refulge quaerentibus; claues habens, aperi pulsantibus. Moueant in te pastoralia uiscera oues sanguine agni redemptae et occulto illius adiutorio a luporum dentibus erutae; ostendentes tibi uulnera sua, et ferinis morsibus cruentas conscientias renudantes, intende et suscipe; iam plagas suas

non differunt prodere; noli differre diligentiam medicinae. 6. Hi sunt quibus in ecclesia stantibus tamquam in paradiso constitutis uetustus ille inimicus inuidit. Ille pectore et uentre serpens iterum incautis illapsus est, iterum fefellit, iterum capitiuauit. Sed et hi tandem respicientes et reformidantes antiquae damnationis exemplum non a facie dei refugiunt, non se umbraculo excusationis occultant, non inani defensione uerborum tamquam infructuoso uelamento foliorum contegunt pudenda commissa, sed discindunt coram illo corda sua, effundunt animas suas. Nec fugiunt timore sed redeunt et per intercessionem tuam domino suo reddi desiderant.[2] Tergantur eorum oculi a lacrimis, pedes colligantur a lapsu. Occurre reuertentibus de longinquo. Habitat quippe in te qui hoc fecit minori filio, cuius luxuriam peregrinationis labor et egestas miserabilis subsecuta est. Epulentur et isti de uitulo saginato. Audiant, quia mortui erant et reuixerunt, perierant et innuenti sunt.[3] 7. Moueant te

---

[2] The reason why the deacon mentions here the special relationship which the pontiff has with God as well as to the faithful is simply to show that the pontiff can intervene with God on behalf of all of the faithful. This is what the deacon means when he uses the words interventus (with the faithful) and "intercessio" (with God). Cf. II, 89-92. The text here shows rather clearly the movement going from the penitents to God while in II, 89-92, the movement is seen as going from God to the penitents. The present text shows the action of the pontiff to be a prayer of request before God.

[3] The object of the tears here is to move the pontiff to action since it is he alone who has the power of the keys to forgive sin (I, 64-65). The contribution which the assembly present makes is to encourage and invite--by their own terms--the intervention of the pontiff himself.

pro eis fraterni fletus et circumstantium gemitus, non pro suis sed pro alienis peccatis,[4] nec penitus alienis, quia in uno corpore et sub uno capite patientibus quibusdam membris compatiuntur. In spiritu enim lenitatis intendunt ne et ipsi temptentur, nam quomodo non debent flere pro fratribus lapsis atque conuersis, quos orare Christus docuit etiam pro inimicis?[5] Horum tu omnium gemitus adiuua, additis tuis; et merita tua longe maiora tamquam canos mentis tuae prosterne pro filiis tuis ante faciem dei tui. Hac humilitate altior eris, hoc dolore laetaberis, hac seruitute regnabis. 8. Bonus es odor Christi. Ammoto igne pietatis ad propitiandum deum flagra pro miseris, misericordia plenum pectus in aram caritatis impone.[6] Sede apostolica sublimatus es. Hi iacent lapsu, descende tu affectu.[7] Imitare patrem cuius uoluntas est ut non pereat unus

---

[4] The same term circumstantes is found in II, 83 while in other parts of the sermons, they are referred simply as the stantes (cf. I, 107; II, 85; III, 50). Those who are prostrate on the ground (cf. III, 3: prostrata turba miserum) are the penitents while those who are standing are the faithful non-penitents but who together form one flock and one body in Christ. It is in this way that the deacon refers to the congregation: restat ut ipse jam facias quod pastorali sollicitudine universo gregi debes, et confessione jacentium et confessione jacentium et maerori stantium et voci deprecantium (I, 106).

[5] The comparison here is clear: if the gospel enjoins us to pray for our enemies, how much more love should we have in coming to the aid of our fallen brothers? Christ has already given us the example in word as well as in action (cf. III, 53). They must follow the example of Christ because they are members of the one body of Christ.

[6] It is the heart of the pontiff which constitutes the matter of the sacrifice of propitiation which the pontiff offers for those who ask for reconciliation. In other words, the whole interiority of the bishop is engaged in the accomplishment of his ministry of reconciliation. The affective nature of his ministry is here dramatically revealed.

[7] The words sede apostolica sublimatus es indicates the position of the bishop in the congregation around whom (circumstantes) the rest of the congregation is assembled.

Moreover, the active intervention of the pontiff affects him deeply. The pontiff is urged by the deacon to decend from his throne and to embrace the penitents who are prostrati before him. In other words, the corporal position of the bishop translates the state of soul of the same pontiff.

XUM

de pusillis istis. Imitare filium qui cum in forma dei esset, formam serui accepit, ueiens ministrare, non ministrari. Imitare spiritum sanctum qui secundum deum interpellat pro sanctis. Ipse enim et te pro iestis excitat supplicare, per quem caritas in tuo corde diffusa est. Offer reconciliandos redeuntes, quos reuocabas errantes.[8] Ora pro inuentis, quos perditos inquirebas.[9] 9. Refugiendo ueram uitam in peccatis suis portis appropinquauerant inferorum, quae non uincunt cuius cathedram tenes. Lazarum dominus lapidea sepulcri mole coopertum et quadriduano cadauere iam putentem excitauit a mortuis et magna uoce produxit e tumulo. At ille, iam quidem uiuus sed adhuc funereis uinculis alligatus, nondum uiuentium consortio reddebatur. Soluite illum, inqui, et sinite ire, ut diuinum beneficium humano ministerio compleretur. 10. Similiter et isti in morte peccatorum suorum sub duro pondere desperationis iacebant et fetida morum corruptione putruerant.[10] Iam dei uirtute uiuificati de tenebris suis confitendo prodecunt, sed adhuc reatus obligatione inuoluti a sanctorum societate seiuncti sunt. Ab illo resuscitantur sed tibi soluendi offeruntur, mixime quia apostoli throno sedes, cui dictum est: quae solueris in terra, soluta erunt et in caelo. 11. Viscera tua sanctitatis et misericordiae plena nostris non indigent uocibus. Et quod pro istis rogo, non tam mea deprecatione

---

[8] The pontiff here offers to God not only himself, but the penitents as well, that is, the broken and humiliated spirits of the penitents (cf. I, 52-53; III. 40). The pontiff actively intervenes on behalf of the penitents as a minister of reconciliation with God.

[9] Here the deacon gives in detail what the pontiff has already done on behalf of the penitents. While they were as yet sinners, the pontiff called them back to penance and in fact, went out in search of them. He looked for them while as yet they were lost much like Christ did in the gospels (cf. II,78-81).

[10] In penance, the role of Christ and the role of the pontiff are oriented as the one role of Christ and those of his disciples at the resurrection of Lazarus. The word of Christ excites the avowal of sin in the sinner and his return to light much like this same word raised up Lazarus from the tomb. And just as the disciples had to unbind Lazarus in order to let him go, so too must the pontiff unbind those who are already vivificati but remain as yet involuti. Such an image permits us to distinguish the action of Christ from that of the pontiff by underlining the absolute primacy of the first and making the second appear as ministerial only. All and every confusion between the divine act of Christ and the created act of the Church is totally avoided. Both, however, remain tightly coordinated by having the second "complete" the first.

XUM

quam tua paterna dilectione facturus es. Nec tamen hoc quod exhibemus officium superflue deputabitur, quando haec uerba nostra istis efficiunt dei munera cariora, cum per nos audiunt quid per tua merita consequantur. Nam et pater qui est in caelis scit quid nobis necessarium sit, priusquam petamus ab eo, et tamen ut petamus hortatur petentibusque largitur ut amplius filii diligant patrem, quem petendo senserint dantem, ne si omnia priusquam petant acceperint, nota sibi existiment, non donata. 12. Persolui ergo officium meum qualicumque sermone, etsi uix digno tuis paternis auribus, seruiendo tamen istorum fraternis uulneribus. Restat ut ipse iam facias quod pastorali sollicitudine uniuerso gregi debes et confessioni iacentium et maerori stantium et uoci deprecantium, ut ipse dominus deus noster faciat quod promisit. Accipiat pro sacrificio suo contribulatum spiritum istorum, cor eorum contritum et humiliatum non spernat. Gementes suppliciter exaudiat misericorditer, emendatis in praesenti parcat in futuro, solutos in terra soluat in caelo.

SERMO II.

1. Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile, ecce nunc dies salutis. Moueant te lacrimae paenitentium, sancte papa, et indulgentiam desiderantium per te ab illo qui habitat in te.[11] Ad illum quippe ueniunt et prosternuntur ei et

---

[11] It is clear from this passage that it is God who is the source of all pardon (ab illo) while the pontiff is only an instrument (per te). In reality, it is God who calls sinners to life and pardon. It is the voice of Christ which calls the sinner from death to life, much as he called Lazarus from the tomb (cf. I, 81-93; II, 19-23; III, 15-23).

Moreover, the inhabitation of God in the pontiff is given to us here in a special way. Here it is God who intervenes on behalf of the penitents by the intermediary of the pontiff which is the object of the postulatio of the penitents and of the whole assembly. The two words per and ab show this clearly. The pardon of God is the source and principal cause of reconciliation and the role of the pontiff is always instrumental. Yet, this relationship between God and the pontiff is not passing or accidental but stable and is signified by the word habitat which signifies a sort of permanence of relationship. Thus, this active intervention of God by his minister rests--in the eyes of those who ask for his intervention--on the permanent relationship which unites the minister to God and which is pictured for us here by the word "inhabitation."

plorant ante dominum qui eos fecit, ut delens quod fecerunt et reficiat ipse quod fecit. 2. Auertit faciem suam a peccatis eorum, non auertat ab eis; non sit uultus eius super eos mala facientes, ut perdat de terra memoriam eorum, sed oculi eius super paenitentes ac sitientes et aures eius ad preces eorum. Per corups peccarunt, corpus affligutn; de sua malitia exegerunt poenam, de dei misericordia exigunt ueniam; ut illum propitentur irascuntur sibi, et ne puniat ille se puniunt. 3. Afferunt ei sacrificium spiritum contribulatum, ut cor contritum et humiliatum non spernat, qui superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam. Baptismus eos fecerat nouos, sanet paenitentia uulneratos. Non seruauerunt quod professi sunt, non eis reseruetur quod confessi sunt; non exegerunt uindictae, debitum non expendant; misericordiam praebuerunt, misericordiam mereantur; dimiserunt, dimittatur eis; dederunt, detur eis. 4. Mali terreni moles, qua in tenebris conscientiae premebantur, uoce Christi disrumpta est. Tamquam de sepulcro in hanc lucem confitendo prodeunt, solue illos et sine ire.[12] Habes enim claues, quibus quicquid in terra solueris, soluatur in caelo. Regnanti seruierunt eorum membra peccato, nunc uictrici iustitiae redduntur. Oculi quos illecebrae deceperant delictorum, nunc lacrimas fundunt. 5. Aures quae libenter patuerunt illicitis uocibus, nunc pro se flentium gemitu feriuntur. Lingua quae peruersa libertate superbiens gloriabatur, nunc humiliata deprecatur. Manus operatae nequiter quaerunt supplices medicinam. Pedes cucurrere ad nefas, mutato

---

[12] The penitents have been converted; therefore, they can be reconciled which the deacon here asks of the bishop. The deacon asks for the application of the power of the keys. Thus, the attitude of the penitents and the intervention of the pontiff correspond to each other and one promotes the other.

itinere quo uenerint cernimus. Totumque corpus obnoxium prius iniquitatibus nunc prostratum uidemus in fletibus. 6. His exterioribus motibus interius Christus uictor apparet.[14] Crucietur hostis expulsus. Fortior uasa fortis eripuit, qui ligato illo solui quos coeperat imperauit. Dolor est in confessione paenitentium, sed prope est dominus his qui obtriuerunt cor. Dolor iste medicinalis est, non poenalis. Medici enim desiderabat manus, cuius illa uox est: ure renes meos et cor meum. Dolor iste putredini aduersus est, non saluti. 7. Non uult enim deus mortem peccatoris, quantum ut reuertatur et uiuat. Nec bene ualentibus opus est medicus, sed aegrotis. Quoniam ille non uenit uocare iustos, sed peccatores in paenitentiam. Non ut peccatores se esse laetentur, sed magis lugendo peccata fateantur. Oderint in se quod odit et deus, ut ab eo salui facti oculis eius placere mereantur. Sicut enim medicus non optat, sed curat aegrotum, sic Christus sanator est peccatorum, non amator. 8. Paenitentia est ergo peccatorum uindex, ut uindicta uitetur, et a poenis liberans poena, iudicium praeueniens iudicem, et cruciatus propitians cognitorem, praenuntians aduersus hominem quod fiat pro homine, et reum ne damnetur accusans. Ille hostis antiquus amplius istis iam redemptis quam illi nondum capitiuato primo homini inuidit. Astutiores in ecclesia dolos quam in paradiso machinatus est. Ibi enim ut facilius deciperet nondum ruinae hominis praecesserat quod caueretur exemplum, et mors inexperta cito credita est non futura. 9. Nunc uero cum post illus lapsum omnes ex illo ad mortem carnis nati fuerimus, etiam mortem spiritus denuo noxius serpens ut seduceret incredibilem fecit, et ausus est iterum dicere: si contra pareceptum feceris non morte morieris. Ille homicida ab initio talia iterum dixit, iterum est creditus, iterum percussit,

[14] In reality, the pontiff can see in the conversion of the penitents the interior victory of Christ.

iterum peccantes deiecit in mortem. Pro quorum peccatis iam Christus uicit et mortem. Sed etiam isti prudentiori remedio reuiuescunt, non excusando, sed accusando commissa. 10. Neque operiunt, sed fructuosis lacrimis aperiunt quod fecerunt, obiniendo superant, non negando. Deus enim misericors mauult interpellante Christo liberare confessos quam oppugnante diablolo punire conuinctos. Audiunt enim et faciunt quod propheta dixit: confitemini domino quoniam bonus est. 11. Ad hoc quippe pertimescunt homines iudici homini confiteri, quia ibi confessionem damnatio consequetur. Apud bonitatem autem dei ubi occultando negari nihil potest, totum potest confitendo purgari.[15] Insiste in eis apud eum qui habitat in te ut propitius fiat omnibus iniquitatibus eorum, sanet omnes languores eorum, redimat de corruptione uitam eorum, erigat elisos, soluat compeditos, iustificet iniustos, ut diligat iustos. Intercedat patrifamilias qui sterilem arborem eradicare comminabatur. 12. Non enim frustra excommunicando humilitatis fossam circumdedisti ac sordes lugubres sed tamen fertiles tamquam cophinum stercoris adhibuisti.[16] Gratulaberis in eis de fructu laboris tui et de tua intercessione laetaberis. Multa pro eis sacrificia, tot etiam circumstantium fratrum contribulati spiritus offeruntur et pro baptismo, cuius fidem non seruauerunt, multae funduntur lacrimae promimorum.[17] 13. Qui enim stant,

---

[15] We notice here very clearly the instrumental causality which belongs to the bishop: the intervention of the bishop before God takes place in the interiority of the pontiff. It is in reality God who inhabits this interiority of the pontiff and to whom the pontiff prays.

[16] Once again, the deacon here enumerates the things which the bishop has done for the penitents. When they entered into the whole penitential process, it was the pontiff who excommunicated them. Yet, this excommunication was not one of punishment but one of mercy. All the penitential practices were endured in order to lead the penitent back to reconciliation with God.

[17] All of the faithful--both circumstantes and the penitents--share the same spiritual values and the circumstantes bring the material of a true contrite spirit (Ps. 51) on behalf of the penitents. This corresponds to the same spiritual sentiments as in II, 12: afferunt ei sacrificium spiritum contribulatum.

caueant ne cadent.[18] Consociant illi maerorem suum uulneri istorum ut sibi consocietur sanitas eorum. Illi inclinantur ut erigant, quia istis prosternunter ut surgant.[19] In omnibus deus operatur quoniam deus caritas est.[20] Omnium ergo te caritas maueat quae in te honoratius habitat, ut tuo interuentu et istorum pro suis et illorum pro fratum delictis praeces et fletus exaudiantur a domino, ut sit omnium communis salus quorum in communi delicto communis est gemitus,[21]

---

[18] All of the faithful share the solicitude for the salvation of the penitents. Cf. III, 46: Isti (penitents) pro sui isti (stantes) pro fraterna salute solliciti.

[19] The stantes --by their tears-- are identified with the penitents but are also distinguished from them in their intervention on behalf of the penitents. Their respective positions are different. But the reason why the stantes inclinant is precisely the quia of the second group (penitents) and the two together are directed toward one objective: the reconciliation of the penitents.

[20] The deacon sees in this fraternal charity of the assembly a manifestation of the very action of God. For it is God who interiorly raises up and creates this charity. God acts in and by his Church which is the body of Christ.

The deacon also mentions baptism and tears. In order to understand this manner of speaking, we must realize that it was a constant theme in the early Church that penance was "a second plank after baptism"(Vogel, op.cit., p. 162,166,169,175). Penance and Baptism were thus closely allied and very early there arose a parallel between the water of Baptism and the water of the tears of penance both of which had an analogous efficacy. We see the same analogy in the Sacramentarium Gelasianum,I,38 (ed.L.C. Mohlberg,Op.Cit.,p.56). Here,however, the origin of the tears is not specified but in our present text, it is the tears of the whole congregation. This indicates the active role of the whole congregation in its intervention for the penitents and of their reconciliation.

[21] The whole process of reconciliation is presented to us in this one sentence. The respective roles of the congregation are here specified: of the assembly, of the minister and of God which all appear as distinct, coordinated and subordinated all at the same time. The charity of the congregation moves the pontiff to action which finds a correspondence to the charity which is in the heart of the pontiff. Thus moved, the pontiff intervenes in order to exercise his ministry (Cf. I,85). God's action corresponds in its own turn to this intervention of the pontiff which is, in reality, primary since the role of the pontiff is only an intermediate one. The pontiff has a role distinct from the congregation and superior to it since it is the bishop who is the bond between the assembly and God. Yet,this intervention by the bishop was in fact put into motion by the tears, etc.,of the assembly. It is the charity of the congregation which moves the charity of the bishop to action.

Moreover, it is here clear that the intervention of the bishop is not devoid of affection. In fact, the bishop engages himself with great affectivity since it is to his heart to which the penitents have appealed and it is with his heart that the bishop prays to God.

atque in societate corporis Christi sit omnium gaudium post dolorem quorum non omnium uulnus, sed omnium dolor est propter indiuiduam caritatem per Christum dominum nostrum, cui est honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum.[22] Amen.

SERMO III.

1. Apostolicum pectus uenerabilis sacerdotis, sanctum misericordiae domicilium, orari pro se desiderans orat prostrata turba miserorum.[23] Hanc tibi, beatissime papa, gloriosam redemptam tamquam speculam pastoralem sanctus sanctorum et pastor pastorum, redemptor captiuorum, inuentor perditorum, sanator aegrotorum de sua caelesti sede concessit, non alta sapienti, sed humilibus consentienti, non morbos ouium fastidienti sed sano languidis paterna ueritate seruienti, non ad iactantiam sed ad medicinam, non ministrari sed ministrate, non a quibus orari te delecteris sed pro quibus orans exaudiri merearis.[24]

2. Intercessionem pro his apud te sollemniter facio loquens uolenti, non extorquens neganti; quos commendo sermone, praeuenis pietate; pro quibus nunc ad te

---

[22]The real reason for the common pain and tears is that all--both penitents and the stantes --belong to the same body of Christ. Even though the wound of sin is always proper to the one who committed the same, the pain which it causes is felt by all the members of the body of Christ.

[23]The terms used here misericordia and miserum correspond to each other intentionally in the mind of the deacon. Before these miserable people (penitents), the bishop appears as the minister of God who has mercy (Cf. I, 69).

The penitents see in the pontiff "the holy habitation of mercy," and for that reason, they can expose their wounds to him because he appears "venerable" to them, that is, accessible. In return, the intervention of the pontiff adapts itself to the attitude of the penitents.

[24]The particular position of the bishop in the assembly is due to his special and stable relationship with God. At the same time, this relationship between the pontiff and God also establishes the permanent relationship between the pontiff and Christians which is also due to God. This relationship is called to mind here. The words hanc and tibi at the beginning of the sentence establishes this relationship due to the intervention of God who has given "this" assembly to the bishop. This presidancy of the bishop by the work of God underlines the characteristics of this position as one of humility, ordained entirely to the service of the people.

sonat os meum, pro his quibus cor tuum clamat ad dominum.[25] Adsunt squalentes gementes, tamquam remota mole duritae ab occultis suis uelut de sepulcro mortis in manifestationem satisfactionis prodeuntes, sicut de Lazaro dominus ait: solue illum et sine ire. Illius quippe magna uoce commoti noluerunt se peccatores defendendo interire, sed reuiuescere confitendo, ut de tenebris mortuae conscientiae reddita spei luce procederent. Proinde uincula quibus ligati sunt detrahe, quoniam quae solueris in terra soluta erunt in caelo, quo non audebat oculos leuare ille peccator qui percutiebat pectus suum dicens: domine, propitius esto mihi peccatori. 3. Quo enim leuaret oculos, fideret ubi nodos sui reatus agnosceret, et tamen descendit de templo iustificatus magis quam ille phariseus, merito humilitatis, non aequitatis suae. Et qui in templo domini de longinquo stabat, ei potius ipse dominus proinquabat. Nos, inquit apostolus, templa dei uiui sumus. Et si hoc de omnibus bonis fidelibus uerum est, quanto magis de te qui regendis fidelibus praesides, in eo praesertim loco ubi praesedit[26] ille cui dictum est: tibi dabo claues regni caelorum. Adsunt ergo isti in templo dei, hoc est in ecclesia dei, do longinquo prostrati desiderantes petere

---

[25] Here the pontiff prays to God on behalf of the penitents whose advocate he has become just as the deacon is before the bishop.

[26] The pontiff is one of the congregation and of the faithful in the strongest sense of the word, i.e., one who poses and professes the act of faith of Baptism. God inhabits the pontiff, however, in a special way (inhabitation) but is not separated from the rest of the faithful. In fact, the relationship between God and his minister is compared to that which unites God with all of the faithful.

reconciliari deo in corpore et[27] sanguine Iesu Christi. Exaudiat eos de corde tuo, de templo sancto suo.[28] 4. Afferunt ei sacrificia, non adipem arietum, nec carnes taurorum, nec multitudines caprorum pinguium, nec primogenita sua fructus uentris sui pro peccato animae suae, sed spiritum contribulatum, cor contritum et humiliatum, quod non spernit. Hoc impone, sacerdos bone, pro eis in ara mentis tuae, quam superna flamma sanctae dilectionis accendit, et da pro illis domino odorem suauitatis de uisceribus caritatis. Laborauerunt in gemitu suo, lauerunt per noctes lectum suum, lacrimis stratum suum rigauerunt. Et nunc istam terram rigant sociasque habent lacrimas eorum cum quibus societatem non habent delictorum. 5. Circumstant oculis tuis isti pro sua, isti pro fraterna salute solliciti, non utrique confitentes, sed utrique plangentes.[29] Quod enim membrum contineat unitas corporis et non compatiatur alteri membro patienti, condoleat dolenti, consulat periclitanti, subueniat laboranti. Qui enim se putat stare, uideat ne cadat, et intendat seipsum ne et ipse temptetur;

---

[27] The very reason why the bishop occupies the central position of reconciliation is because he occupies a seat in whose succession the pontiff comes to occupy. By this fact, he has the power which formerly belonged to Peter, the power of the keys originally given to him and now exercised by his successor (Cf. I, 92-94; II, 22). It is the power to deliver from sin signified by the sedes episcopalis which the pontiff has received and which he now exercises on behalf of the penitents.

[28] The whole assembly--on behalf of the penitents--becomes penitential out of love. In and by the coordinated and hierarchial intervention of the pontiff, the deacon and the assembly, in reality, it is God who acts in order to re-establish the wounded members of the body of Christ. The reconciliation of sinners is done in and by the Church and by that very fact, in and by God. It is for that reason that reconciliation of penitents is always achieved in the participation of the body and blood of Christ.

We see here clearly that Eucharistic communion is not something accidental to the reconciliation of the penitent but is rather its authentic perfection. By participating in the body and blood of Christ with the assembly, the penitents were reconciled with both God and the Church.

[29] The penitents were the ones who committed the sins, not the stantes. That is why these latter always remain standing while the others remain prostrate. The sins remain those of the penitents and there is here no "generalized" sense of sin for which all must do penance.

ut alter alterius onera portantes impleant legem Christi.[30] Qui peccatum non fecit, peccatores uocauit, pro peccantibus orauit, peccata donauit. In eius corpore membra sunt ista, alia iacent, alia iacentibus adhaerent, alia ut erigantur sternuntur.[31] Quis sapiens cum homo sit hominem cadere uideat, et se stare superbiat?[32] Non est in his et illis communis iniquitas, sed est communis infirmitas. 6. Omnes petunt ut hi accipiant, omnes pulsant ut his aperiatur; omnes dolent cum isti affliguntur; omnes gaudebunt cum isti sanabuntur. Occultus ille hostis cum angelis suis in istorum erectione torqueatur sicut in elisione laetatus est. Cui quidem isti consenserunt ut delinquerent, sed non consenserunt

---

[30] By coming to the aid of their fallen brothers, the stantes are obeying the law of love which Christ imposed on all of the faithful which, above all else, prompts them to come to the aid of their fallen brothers. Gal 6:2 is cited which emphasizes the mutual help in carrying each other's burdens; in so doing, they fulfill the law of Christ.

[31] The stantes come to the aid of the penitents because they belong to the same body of Christ. The word adhaerent here is significant and is like the solicitude given to a sick person whom one does not want to leave alone. The compassion of the stantes is thereby revealed (cf. III, 47-49). Their very position, then, brings out the mercy and compassion of the ones (stantes) for the others (penitents).

All of this is a reference to the doctrine of the one body of Christ given by St. Paul in I Cor 12:12-30 which justifies the compassion for the sufferings of the penitents. It also justifies the active solidarity of the stantes with the jacentes (cf. III, 48). It is therefore the solidarity of the members of the body of Christ which is the foundation of the active part which the assembly takes in the reconciliation of the penitents.

[32] Both the penitents and the faithful non-penitents make one petition to God: the re-integration of the faithful penitents. Both groups of Christians share this asking by their tears, and sacrifices. These tears are truly the fraterni fletus (I, 59).

Thus, even though the stantes have not sinned in the same way as the penitents, still they have in common a congenital weakness. It is for that reason that St. Paul warns the stantes (I Cor 10:12) not to be proud lest they fall into temptation (cf. III, 51-52).

ut cadentes etiam super birent. Consenserunt ut uulnerarentur sed non consenserunt ut medicinae reluctarentur. Consenserunt ut (a) domino suo fugerent, sed non consenserunt ut ad dominum non redirent. Proinde quem non uicerunt per continentiam, uicerunt per paenitentiam, qua sola inimicus etiam cum uicerit uincitur, qua sola accusator non a negantibus sed a confitentibus superatur. 7. Paenitentia est quae dolorem doloribus eripit et euadit uindicando uindictam. In se enim quisque uindicat qui seipsum cruciat paenitendo ut non iam uindicem iudicem sed patrem receptorem deum reperire mereatur. Sic enim peccati sui ultor quodammodo fuit atque in seipsum asperam sententiam protulit ille qui rediens de longinquo dixit patri: iam non sum dignus uocari filius tuus. Atque hoc eum pater filii honore praestitit dignum quo seipse filii nomine iudicauit indignum. Tormentum cordis est paenitentia sed paruo tempore extinguit aeterna tormenta. 8. O ineffabilis benignitas dei, ut qui eum negando fallere non potest, propitietur confitendo, cui peccatum non occultatur si taceatur, ab eo tamen remittitur si dicatur. Quoniam non quisque deum docet indicando quod fecit, sed quoniam non parum propinquare conatur illi, cui hoc in se displicet quod et illi. Dixi, inquit, proloquar aduersum me delictum meum domino meo, et tu remisisti impietatem cordis mei, et non utcumque proloquar sed aduersus me, inquit, proloquar delicta mea domino. Haec uirtus est paenitentiae ut cum loquitur ipse peccator aduersus se, tunc faciat pro se. Odit enim peccatorem deus ac per hoc qui se peccatorem odit, amat eum deus, quia hoc odit quod deus. 9. Bono animo estote supplices dei; recreamini et consolamini, firmate fidem, erigite spem, accendite caritatem. Donabit uobis peccata qui mortem suam nobis donauit sine peccato, non permittet ut pereatis qui mori uoluit ut uiuatis. Appropinquate deo et appropinquabit nobis; resistite

autem diabolo et fugiet a uobis; mementote uos eius leonis rugientis dentibus eripi; mementote uos illi extorqueri qui uos in aeternum sperabat secum posse torqueri. Auribus percipit dominus lacrimas uestras, habitans in eius praesidentis corde pastoris, cuius mereantur preces fusae pro uobis, quidquid minus ualetis in uestris.[33] 10. Gaude itaque, optime antistitum, quoniam filii tui quos per euangelium genuisti, immo mortui erant et reuixerunt, perierant et inuenti sunt. Conscindatur saccus eorum et accingantur laetitia. Redde illis epulas uituli saginati; eximantur animae eorum de morte, oculi eorum a lacrimis, pedes eorum a lapsu, ut placeant in conspectu domini in regione uiuorum.

[33] The bishop asks that his prayer on behalf of the penitents be heard. His prayer has more efficacy than that of the penitents because of his special and stable relationship with God as his minister.

APPENDIX III

SACRAMENTARIUM GELASIANUM[1]

XV

ORATIONES ET PRAECES SUPER PAENITENTES

[In Sexigesima][2]

Exaudi, domine, preces nostras et confitentium tibi parce peccatis, ut quos conscientiae reatus accusat, indulgentiae tuae miseratio absoluat: per.

Praeueniat hunc famulum tuum, quaesumus, domine, misericordia tua, et omnes iniquitates eius indulgentia deleantur; per dominum nostrum.

Adesto, domine, supplicacionibus nostris, nec sit ab hoc famulo tuo clementia tuae longinqua miseratio; sana uulnera eiusquae remitte peccata, ut nullis a te iniquitatibus separatus/ tibi [f.15r] semper domino ualet adhere:[3] per.

Domine deus noster; qui offensionem nostram non uinceris, sed satisfactionem placaris, respice, quaesumus, ad hunc famulum tuum, qui se tibi peccasse grauiter confitetur.[4] Tuum est ablutionem criminum dare et ueniam prestare peccantibus, qui dixisti paenitentiam te malle peccatorum quam mortem. Concede ergo, domine, hoc, ut et tibi paenitentiam excopias caelebret ut correctis actibus suis conferre tibi ad te sempiterni gaudia caelebretur: per.

---

[1] From L. C. Mohlberg, ed., Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Aeclesiae Ordinis anni circuli (Sacramentarium Gelasianum) Roma, 1960, pp. 17-18, 55-60.

[2] We may note that the Gelasian Sacramentary is of later origin than the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon by the form of the preces. In the former we have the individual imprecations of the pontifex while in the latter, there is more of a communal form, but directed to God.

[3] As in all of the sacramentaries, it is God alone who forgives sin by and through the ministry of the pontifex.

[4] The confession of the penitent is evident but the specificity of the fault is also present: graviter. The early church did consider certain sins very serious as in hominem (adultery, murder) and in Deum (apostacy). Other than these grave sins, the distinction among sins is as yet fluid and sins other than these: Causae majores could be forgiven by a reception of the Eucharist.

XUM

Praecor, domine, clementiam tuae maiestatis ac nominus, ut hic famulo tuo peccata et facinora sua confitenti ueniam dare et praeteritorum ciminum ⟨debita⟩ relaxare digneris. Qui humeris tuis ouem perditam reduxisti ad caulas, qui publicani precibus uel confessione placatus es, tu etiam, domine et huic famulo tuo placare, tu eum praecibus benignus adsiste,/ ut in confessione fleuili [f. 15v] permanens clementiam tuam caeleriter exoret et sanctis ac sacris altaribus restitutus spei rursus aeternae et caelestis gloriae reformetur: per.

XVI

ORDO AGENTIBUS PUBLICAM PAENITENTIAM

Suscipis eum IIII feria mane in capite quadragesimae et cooperis eum cilicio, oras pro eo et inclaudis usque ad Caenam domini. Qui eodum die in germio praesentatur aecclesiae, et prostrato eo omni corpore, in terram, dat orationem pontifex super eum ad reconciliandum in quinta feria Caenae domini, sicut ibi continetur.[5]

XXXVIII

ORATIONES IN QUINTA FERIA

Eodem die non psallitur nec salutat, id est non dicit [f. 53r] Dominus uobiscum, et RECONCILIATIO PAENITENTIS

Omnipotens sempiterne deus, da, quaesumus, uniuersis famulis tuis plenius

---

5 The Gelasian Sacramentary places the time of the beginning penance at the beginning of Lent while forgiveness was imparted on Maundy Thursday (quinta feria). This specification of time was not present in the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon which shows, once again, the later origin of the former.

adque perfectius omnia festi paschalis introire mysteria,[6] ut incunctanter pia corda cognoscant, quantum debeant de confimata in Christo renascentium glorificatione gaudere: per.

Concede credentibus, misericors deus, saluum nobis de Christi passione remedium, et humanae fragilitatis praeteritae culpae laquaeos aeternae suffragio plebs absoluat:[7] per dominum nostrum.

Omnipotens sempiterne deus, qui uitam humani generis pro nobis filio tuo moriente saluasti, praesta, quaesumus, ut in hac populi tui deuocione fructus praeueniat gaudiorum: per dominum.

ORDO AGENTIBUS PUBLICAM PAENITENCIAM

Egreditur paenitens de loco ubi paenitentiam gessit, et in gremio praesentatur aeclesiae prostrato omni corpore in terra.[8] Et postolat in his uerbis diaconus:[9]

Adest, o uenerabilis pontifex, tempus acceptum, dies [f.53v] propitiationis

---

6 Maundy Thursday was the day the early Western Church kept for the reconciliation of penitents. The reason for this was because of the institution of the Eucharist and the commandment of love, from which the penitents were separated (ex-communicare). The forgiveness of sin was always followed by participation in the Holy Mystery as its culminating event. In other words, the reason for penance was directed toward the Eucharist. Both the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon and the present Sacramentary emphasizes this point.

7 It is the whole people -- penitents and non-penitents -- who together pray and weep for the penitents, that they be received back to the Church and participate in the Holy Mystery.

8 Much as in the postulationes, the position of the penitents is on the ground prostrate around the bishop (in gremio).

9 As in the postulationes, the deacon addresses the pontiff on behalf of the penitents and the whole people (Augemur regenerandis, crescimus reuersis).

XUM

diuine et salutis humane, qua mors interitum et uita accepit aeterna principium, quando in vinia domini sabaoth sic nouorum plantatio facienda est, ut purgetur et curatio uetustatis. Quamuis enim a diuitiis bonitatis et pietatis Dei nihil temporis uacet, nunc tamen et largi[t]or est per indulgentiam remissio peccatorum et cupiosior per gratiam adsumptio recascentum. Augemur regenerandis, cresdimus reuersis. Lauant aquae, lauant lacrimae.[10] Inde gaudium de adsumptione uocatorum, hinc laeticiae de absolutione paenitencium. Inde est quod supplex tuus,[11] postea quam in uarias formas criminum neclecto mandatorum caelestium et morum inprobabilium transgressione caecidit, humiliatus atque prostratus prophetica ad deum uoce clamat dicens: Peccaui, impie egi, iniquitatem feci, miserere mei domine, euangelicam uocem [f. 54r] non frustratoria aure capiens: Beati qui lugent, quoniam ipsi consolabuntur. Maud(uc)auit, sicut scriptum est, panem doloris, lacrimis stratum rigauit, cor suum luctu, corpus adflixit ieiuniis, ut animae suae reciperet quam perdiderat sanitatem.[12] Unicum itaque est paenitentiae suffragium, quod et singulis prodest et monibus in commune succurrit.[13] Hic ergo, dum ad paenitudinis actionem tantis excitatur exemplis, sub conspectu ingemiscentis aeclesiae, uenerabilis pontifex, protestatur et dicit: Iniquitates

---

[10] The deacon makes an explicit relationship between the water of baptism (regeneration) and the tears (water) of penance (a second regeneration).

[11] The deacon points out the work which the pontiff has done to convert sinners and the happy result -- by penance -- which is here present in the form of the penitents who have performed penance for those sins.

[12] The penances enumerated here are traditional: fasts, tears, lack of sleep, etc.

[13] It is the whole Christian Community (ingemiscentis aeclesiae) which comes together to pray and fast for the paenitentes. Yet, what is missing here -- and what the postulationes emphasized -- was that the reason for this, namely, that they are all the one body of Christ (Church). This was symbolized by the fact that this forgiveness was performed on Maundy Thursday, the day of the institution of the Eucharist.

meas ego agnosco et delictum meum contra me est semper. Auerte faciem tuam a peccatis meis, domine omnes iniquitates meas dele. Redde mihi laeticiam salutaris tui et spiritu principale confirma me. Quo ita supplicanti et misericordiam dei adflicto corde poscenti, redintegra in eo apostolicae pontifex, quicquid diabulo scindente corruptum est, et orationum tuarum patrocinantibus meritis per diuinae [f.54v] reconciliationis gratiam fac hominem prosimum deo,[14] ut qui antea in suis peruersitatibus displicebat, nunc iam placere se domino in regione uiuorum cum deuicto mortis suae auctore gratuletur: per dominum.

Post hoc admonitur ab episcopo siue alio sacerdote, ut quod paenitendo diluit, iterando non reuocet. Inde uero has dicit orationes sacerdos super eum:

Adesto, domine supplicationibus nostris, et me qui etiam misericordiam tuam primus indigeo, clementer exaudi ut quem non electio meriti sed dono gratiae tuae constituisti operis huius ministrum; da fiduciam tui muneris exequendi et ipse in nostro ministerio quod tuae pietatis est operare: per.[15]

Praesta, quaesumus, domine, huic famulo tuo dignum paenitentiae fructum, ut ecclesiae tuae sanctae, a cuius integritate deuiarat peccando, admissorum ueniam consequendo reddatur innoxius: per dominum.

Deus humani generis benignissime conditor et mi- [f.55r] sericordissime formator, qui hominem inuidia diabuli ab aeternitate deiectum unici tui ⟨filii⟩

---

14 It is evident that, for the deacon, it is only by the prayer of the pontiff that the sins of the penitents can be forgiven. The penance of the sinner, the prayer of the faithful non-penitents, the entreaty of the deacon -- are all preparatory to this action. The sins thereby are truly forgiven and man once again becomes the friend of God (per divinae reconciliationis gratiam fac hominem proximum deo).

15 It is God alone who forgives sin by the ministerium of the pontiff who by no merits of his own (meriti) is now in possession of that power. It is this gift (munus) of God which is now exercised on behalf of the penitents before the pontiff.

sanguine redemisti: uiuifica itaque quem tibi nullatenus more desideras, et qui non derelinquis deuium, adsume corruptum. Moueat pietatem tuam,[16] quaesumis, domine, huius famuli tui lacrimosa suspiria. Tu eius mecere uulneribus. Tu iacenti manum porrige salutarem, ne aeclesia tua aliqua sui corporis porcione uastetur nec grex tuus detrimentum susteneat, ne de familiae tuae damno inimicus exultet, ne renatum lauacro salutari mors secunda possedeat. Tibi ergo, domine, supplices praeces, tibi fletum cordis effundimus. Tu parce confitenti ut imminentibus paene sententiae quae futuri iudicii te miserante non incedat. Nesciat quod territ in tenebris, quod stridit in flammis, atque ab erroris uia ad iter reuersus iusticiae nequaquam ultra nouis uulneribus saucietur, sed integrum sit ei atque perpetuum et quod gratia tua [f.55v] contulit et quod misericordia reformauit: per.

ITEM AD RECONCILIANDUM PAENITENTEM[17]

Omnipotens sempiterne deus, confitenti tibi huic famulo tuo pro tua pietate peccata relaxa, ut non plus ei noceat conscientiae reatus ad paenam quam indulgentia tuae pietatis ad ueniam: per dominum.

Omnipotens et misericors deus, qui peccatorum indulgenciam ad confessione caeleri posuisti, succurre lapsis, miserere confessis, ut quod delictorum catena

---

16 In the postulationes of the Roman Archdeacon, the supplication of the Archdeacon is directed to stir up the pity and mercy in the pontiff so that he will exercise his ministerium on behalf of the penitents. Here, the pontiff directs his prayer to God in order to excite the mercy and pity of God. In other words, what we have here is a greater emphasis on the fact that only God forgives sin. This is present in the next lines: Tu eius medere uulneribus. Tu iacenti manum porrige...tibi ergo, domine, supplicis praeces, tibi fletum cordis effundimus. Tu parci confitenti...

17 A second set of prayers for the reconciliation of penitents is offered here ad libitum. The prayers are in deprecatory fashion as in the first set. This shows the early date of these prayers. Only in the 9th century do we begin to have the indicative tense for the remission of sins.

constringit, magnitudo tuae pietatis absoluat: per.

Deus, qui confitentium tibi corda purificas et accusantes suas conscientias ab omni uinculo iniquitatis absoluis, da indulgentiam reis et medicina tribue vulneratis, ut per accepta remissione omnium peccatorum senceram deinceps deuotione permaneant et nullum redempcionis aeternae susteneant detrimentum: per.

Domine, sanctae pater, omnipotens aeterne deus, [f.56r] respice super hunc famulum tuum qui ab infesta saeculi tempestate demersus fleuili lamentacione suos accusat excessus, ut fletus ac gemitus eius piae suscipias eumque de tenebris ad lumen reuoces, et medellam confitenti, salutem paenitenti, et uulnerato auxilium sanitatis indulgeas. Nec ultra inimicus in eius habeat animam potestatem, cuiusque confessionem libenter ammittens aeclesiae tuae purificatum restituae ac tuo altario repraesenta, ut ad sacramentum reconciliationis ammissum una nobiscum sancto nomini tuo gratias agere mereatur: per.[18]

<XXXVIIII>

RECONCILIATIO PAENITENTIS AD MORTEM[19]

Deus misericors, deus clemens, qui secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum peccata paenitencium deles et praeteritorum criminum culpas venia remis-

---

[18] The word sacramentum is directly applied here to describe the whole process of penance but in the context of the original sacrament which is baptism. The first was lost by sin (ammissum) which now is restored by penance (purificatum restituae).

[19] In the Roman tradition (cf. supra, pp.115-120), penance was denied to no one, especially to those near death. The essentials of penance -- sorrow, prayer, sacerdotal intervention -- are all here present even without the forms of penance otherwise demanded of healthy penitents. The Roman tradition, in other words, had long since put off all forms of rigorism and Novatianism. The mercy of God is stressed here more than the performance of acts of penance (praeteritorum criminum culpas venia remissionis euacuas).

sione restitue. Miserere, domine, gemituum, miserere lacrimarum, et non habentem ficudiam nisi in tua misericordia ad sacramentum reconciliacionis admitte: per.

Maiestatem tuam, domine, supplices depraecamur, ut huic famulo tuo longo squalore paenitenciae macerato miserationes tuae ueniam largire digneris ut nuptiale ueste recepta ad regalem mensam, unde eiectus fuerati, mereatur intrare: per.

Maiestatem tuam quaesumus, domine, sanctae pater, omnipotens aeternae deus, qui non mortem sed peccatorum uitam semper inquiris, respice flentem famulum tuum, adtende prostratum, eiusque planctum in gaudium tua miseracione concede. Scinde delictorum saccum et indue eum laeticiam salutarem, ut post longa peregrinationis famae de sactis altaribus tuis satietur, f.57r ingressus cubiculum regis in ipsius aula benedicat nomen gloriae tuae semper: per dominum.

Deus misericors, deus clemens, qui indulgentiam tuam nullum temporum lege concludis, sed pulsantis misericordiae tuae ianuam aperis, paenitentis etiam sub ipso uitae huius terminum non relinquis: respice propicius super hunc famulum tuum remissionem sibi omnium peccatorum tota cordis confessione poscentem. Renoua in eum, piissime pater, quod actione, quod uerbo, quod ipsa denique cogitacione diabolica fraude uiciatum est, et unitate corporis aeclesiae membrum tuae redemptionis adnecte. Miserere gemituum, miserere lacrimarum, et non habentem fiduciam nisi in misericordia tua ad sacramentum reconciliationis admitte, quia nullius animae in hoc corpore constituti difficilis apud te aut tarda curatio est. Fidelis enim es in uerbis tuis, qui conuersum peccatorem [f.57v] non longa temporum spatia differendum, sed mox ut in te gemuisset dixisti esse ⟨saluandum⟩: per.

ORATIONES POST RECONCILIATIONEM UEL POSTEAQUAM COMMUNICAUERIT. Deus, qui confitencium tibi corda purificas et accusantes se conscientias ab omni uinculo

iniquitatis absolues, da indulgentiam <r>eis et medicinam tribue uulneratis, ut percepta remissionem omnium peccatorum in sacramentis tuis sencera deinceps deuocione permaneat et nullum redemptionis aeternae susteneat detrimentum: per.

INDICES

1. Works of Ambrose

Apol.

1, 16: 64.

1, 23: 25.

Cain

1, 8: 26.

II, 4: 48, 71.

II, 11: 35.

Ep.

19, 1: 29.

25, 1: 26:

26, 1: 26, 56.

26, 16: 53.

41, 4: 30.

51, 1: 25.

51, 3: 75.

51, 15: 31, 83.

63, 47: 30.

67, 1: 26.

67, 6-11: 82.

67, 11: 85.

Ex. ps. I

55: 76.

Ex. ps. XII

1: 25.

Ex. ps. XXXV

3: 35.

Ex. ps. XXXVII

4: 35.

10: 58.

14: 49, 79.

16: 33.

37: 98.

43: 29.

56: 75.

Ex. ps. XXXVIII

37: 34, 38, 59, 70 - 71.

Ex. ps. XXXIX

21: 35.

Ex. ps. LXI

4: 35.

Ex. ps. XCVIII

4: 30.

9: 31.

Ex. ps. CXVIII

7: 58.

8: 64, 81.

10: 34, 74.

17: 80.

18: 62.

22: 35, 84.

26: 82.

41: 33.

Ex. Ev. Luc.

V, 8: 52, 84.

V, 10: 29, 58, 67, 76.

V, 11: 30.

V, 13: 34, 67, 72.

V, 19: 35.

V, 27: 51-57.

V, 89: 58.

V, 92: 58.

VI, 99: 94.

VI, 109: 53.

VII, 33: 73.

VII, 44: 54.

VII, 74: 35.

VII, 75: 61.

VII, 80: 70.

VII, 82: 70.

VII, 94: 74.

VII, 95: 73.

VII, 207: 48, 51.

VII, 208: 34, 53, 55.

VII, 224: 51.

VII, 229: 55.

VII, 232: 86.

VII, 233: 50.

VII, 248: 54.

VIII, 52: 58

VIII, 175: 33.

IX, 5: 64.

IX, 8: 71.

IX, 29: 31, 61.

Exam.

I, 7: 76.

III, 2: 66.

V, 24: 86.

Hel.

VII, 21: 80.

VII, 83: 29.

Ob. Theo.

27.

Off.

II, 27: 80, 81.

Paen.

I, 1: 29, 40, 41, 47, 56.

I, 2: 30, 35, 39, 40, 42, 53, 60, 68, 69, 73.

I, 3: 35, 39, 42, 44, 72, 73.

I, 4: 30, 32, 45, 98.

I, 5: 30, 32, 39, 49.

XUM

I, 7: 32, 36, 68, 72, 73, 98.

I, 8: 34, 36, 43, 71.

I, 9: 41, 43, 79.

I, 10: 35, 39, 43, 44, 79.

I, 11: 56, 61.

I, 13: 62.

I, 14: 39, 49, 64.

I, 15: 38, 58, 62, 82.

I, 16: 60, 62, 63, 84.

I, 17: 49, 60, 71.

I, 21: 35.

I, 27: 41.

I, 33: 34.

I, 35: 34.

I, 37: 86.

I, 40: 91.

I, 42: 33.

I, 45: 33.

I, 46: 94.

I, 60: 30.

I, 73: 33.

I, 80: 32.

I, 85: 38.

I, 90: 30.

I, 92: 35.

II, 2: 44, 53, 67, 68.

II, 3: 62, 85.

II, 4: 40, 41, 44, 73.

II, 5: 69.

II, 6: 41.

II, 7: 57, 77, 78, 85.

II, 9: 63, 81.

II, 10: 59.

II, 12: 34, 99.

II, 17: 94.

II, 34: 35.

II, 54: 32.

II, 56: 66.

II, 58: 66.

II, 73: 30.

II, 86: 29.

II, 87: 98.

II, 91: 29.

II, 96: 31.

Sacra.

IV, 13 - 14: 72.

Spir.

III, 18: 54, 68, 70, 71.

III, 137: 32, 35.

2. Works of Leo

Ep.

1, 2: 128.

12, 6: 128.

18, 1: 128.

31, 3: 111.

108, 1: 108, 125.

108, 2: 109, 114, 118, 126.

159, 6: 121, 123, 125.

164, 4: 119.

164, 5: 122.

167, 1: 123.

167, 2: 118, 121.

167, 8: 122.

168, 2: 124.

171, 1: 125.

267, 1: 109.

Serm.

2, 1: 107, 110.

3, 1: 107, 110, 111.

3,33: 112, 112, 124.

4, 1: 111.

4, 3: 108, 112, 113.

5, 1: 107, 110, 132.

5, 2: 109.

5, 3: 109, 113.

5, 4: 109.

20, 3: 126.

24, 3: 110.

29, 2: 111.

35, 4: 121.

48, 4: 126.

49, 3: 122.

49, 5: 119.

50, 3: 119.

63, 6: 110.

76, 4: 113.

108, 4: 118.

XUM

3. Other Ancient Authors

Augustine: 58, 65, 78-79, 128, 130, 136-137, 161-164, 166.

Basil: 46, 129.

Caesarius of Arles: 116-118.

Celestine I: 117-118.

Clement of Alexandria: 81.

Cyprian: 37, 42, 90.

Donatus: 128.

Eusebius: 38.

Faustus of Riez: 115-117.

Gennadius of Marseilles: 115.

Gregory the Great: 127, 153, 161.

Innocent I: 115-117, 186.

Jerome: 3, 128, 157, 159, 180-188.

Lucifer Caligari: 186-187.

Novatian: 37-48, 89-96.

Optatus of Milevium: 70, 130.

Origen: 77, 184

Philo of Alexandria: 48

Sozomen: 160-161.

Tertullian: 42, 46, 66.

4. Modern Authors

Amann, E.: 37.

Ballerini, C.: 126.

Barry, M. F.: 51.

Baum, G.: 22.

Bayard, L.: 90.

Berrouard, M. F.: 23

Blondel, M.: 22.

Botte, B.: 156.

Bussini, F.: 133.

Cappuyns, R.: 129.

Chavasse, A.: 134, 155.

Courcelle, P.: 27.

Daly, C. B.: 37.

D'Ales, A.: 37.

Dekkers, E.: 120, 134.

Dold, A.: 136.

Diercks, C. F.: 89.

Feltoe, C. L.: 105.

Franck, H.: 87.

Freemantle, W. H.: 180.

Galtier, P.: 2, 103-104, 159.

Goeller, E.: 29, 103-104, 159.

Jungmann, A.: 158.

Koch, H.: 31.

La Bonnardiere, A.: 23

Mohlberg, L. C.: 133-134, 136, 141, 155, 157-159, 161, 199, 206.

Morin, G.: 133-134, 136.

Munier, C.: 115.

Odoardi, G.: 95.

Palanque, J. R.: 24-26.

Palmer, P.: 2, 38.

Poschmann, B.: 2, 23, 103, 115, 128, 161.

Quasten, J.: 37.

Quesnel, P.: 104.

Schwartz, E.: 104.

Silva - Tarouca: 104.

Steeger, Th.: 105.

Turner, C. H.: 116.

Vogel, C.: 2, 115, 133, 141, 155, 190, 199.

Vogt, H. J.: 89-90.